NEW

YOUR HANDBOOK TO THE LAND OF *'LA DOLCE VITA'*

ITALY

10 UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES TO DISCOVER ON YOUR NEXT TRIP

THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL GUIDE

RENAISSANCE ART UNCOVERED

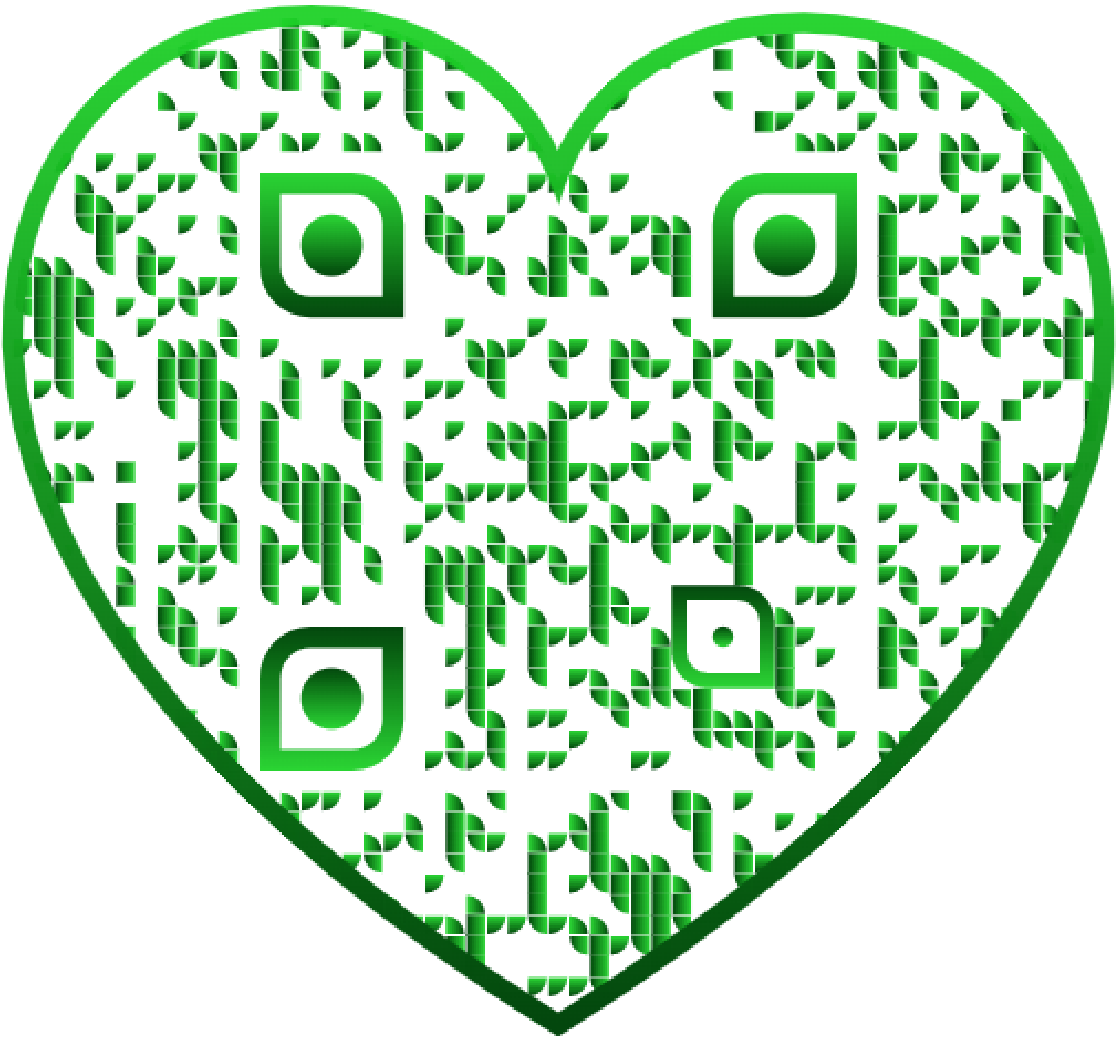
CLASSIC RECIPES MAKE REGIONAL DISHES AT HOME

+ ESSENTIAL ETIQUETTE TIPS

HISTORY • ART & ARCHITECTURE • CULTURE & CUSTOMS

Digital Edition

FIRST EDITION



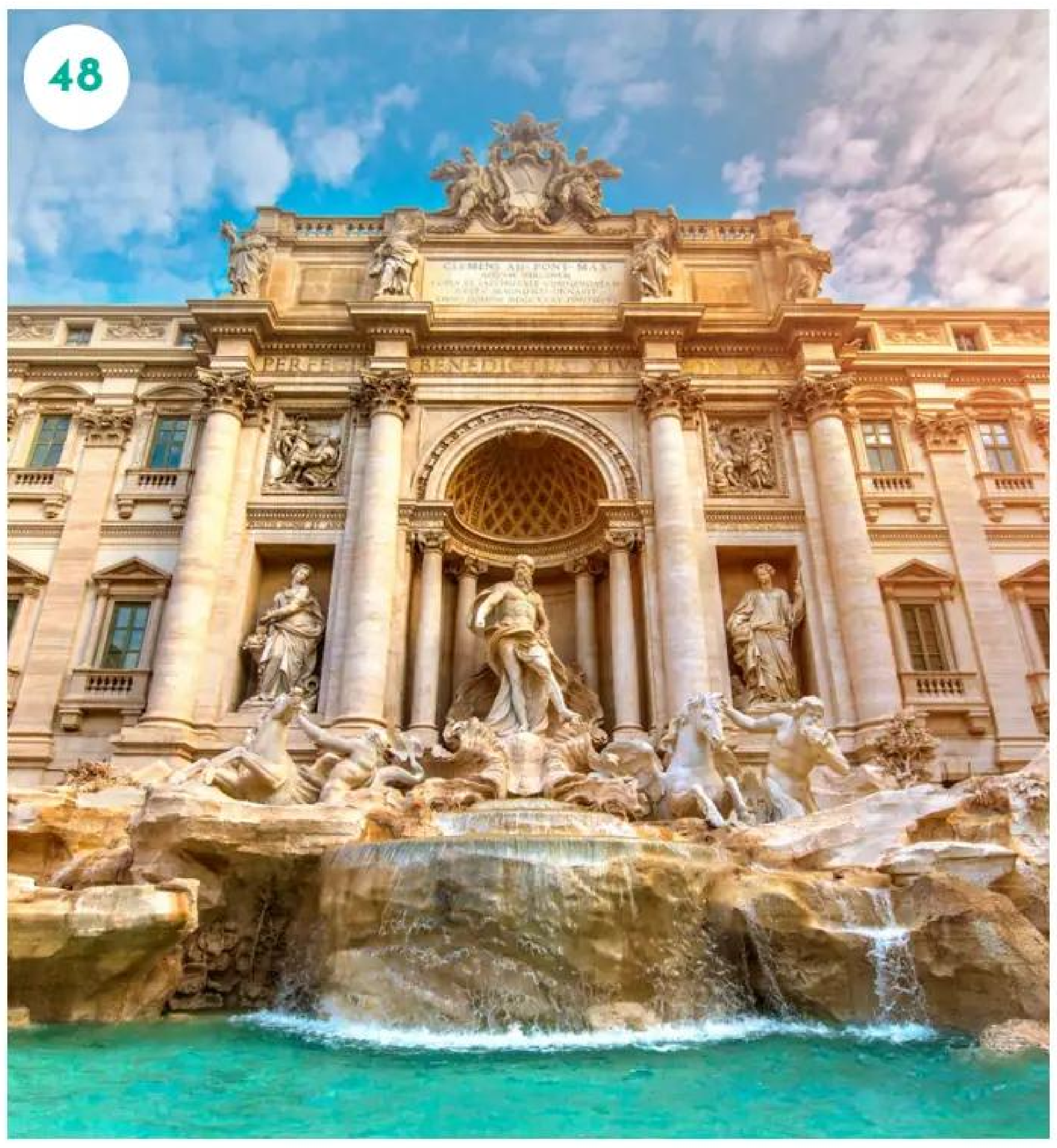
BENVENUTO

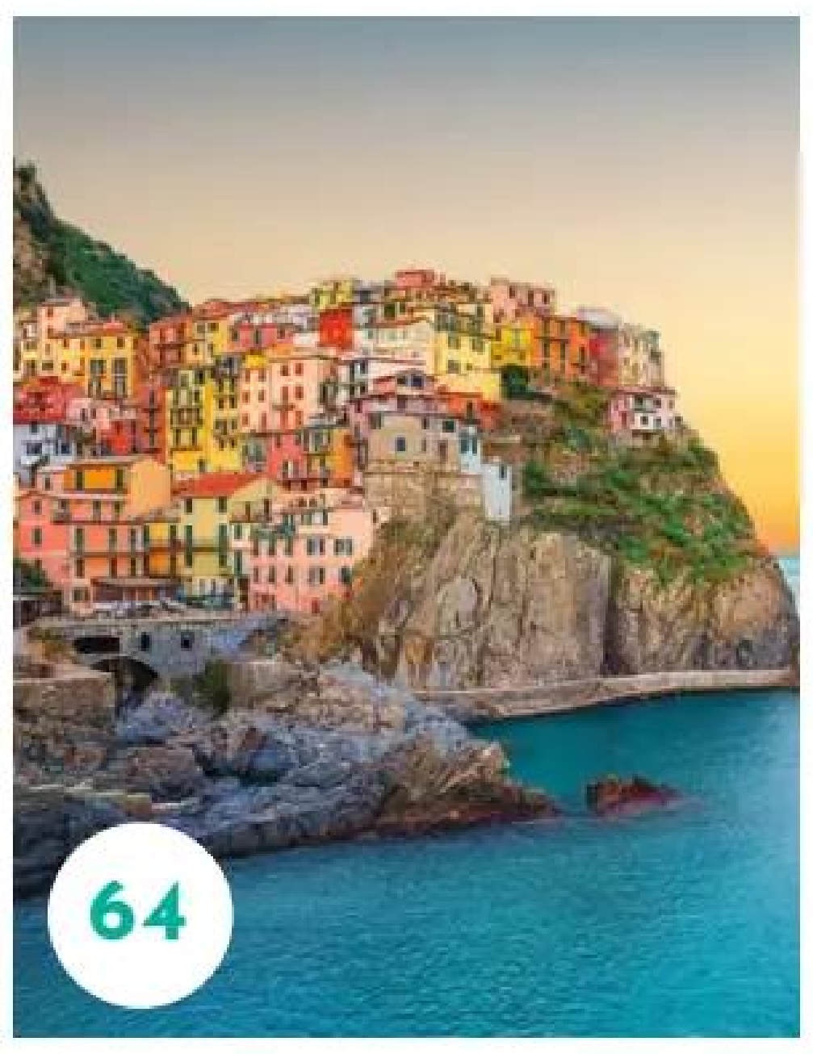
WELCOME

Italy is often ranked among the top five countries in the world to visit, but why? Is it the flavourful food, its rich history, architecture, ancient ruins and Renaissance art or its diverse landscapes – from the Alpine peaks of the Dolomites to the rolling hills of Tuscany to picturesque coastal villages on the Amalfi Coast? How about a little bit of all of this? In this brand new book, we explore the history of Italy, where to travel and its customs and culture. Discover the importance of religion and sport, the truth behind the mafia and how the nation made its mark in fashion, cinema, music and fast cars! Did you know an Italian was the real brains behind the telephone? Grab a coffee, sit down and enjoy finding out even more about *la dolce vita* – the Italian way of life!

Image Getty Images

CONTENTS





HISTORY

10 EARLY ITALY
The cultures and innovations that came before the Roman Empire

12 THE ROMAN EMPIRE
How Rome became the master of the Mediterranean world

22 FROM ROME TO RENAISSANCE
The medieval period was full of imperial ambition, religious controversy and power struggles

28 RISORGIMENTO
The final battle for Italian unification

32 MODERN ITALY
How Italy navigated fascism, world wars and a global financial crisis

TRAVEL

38 TURIN
Uncover the cultural gems found in this intriguing city

39 MILAN
Uncloak one of the world's fashion capitals

40 VENICE
Navigate the unique waterways of Italy's city of bridges

43 BOLOGNA
Famed for its gastronomy, Bologna is a foodie's paradise

44 PISA
This ancient city has much more to offer than its famous wonky landmark

46 FLORENCE
A shrine to the Renaissance era, this city is full of art and culture

47 SAN MARINO
This microstate in the heart of Italy has so much to offer

48 ROME
Visit the eternal city for both ancient and modern wonders

56 POMPEII
Take a trip to Vesuvius to visit the preserved remnants of a land frozen in time

57 NAPLES
Rich in history, culture and, of course, pizza

58 SICILY
Have an explosive time exploring Europe's largest active volcano

60 SARDINIA
Pure shores and lavish stays meet granite rock and ancient ways

62 THE AMALFI COAST
Glamour and history, from the mountains to the sea

64 CINQUE TERRE
These five colourful coastal villages are jewels of the Ligurian coastline

66 THE ITALIAN LAKES
Go for the adventure or relaxation, stay for the stunning views

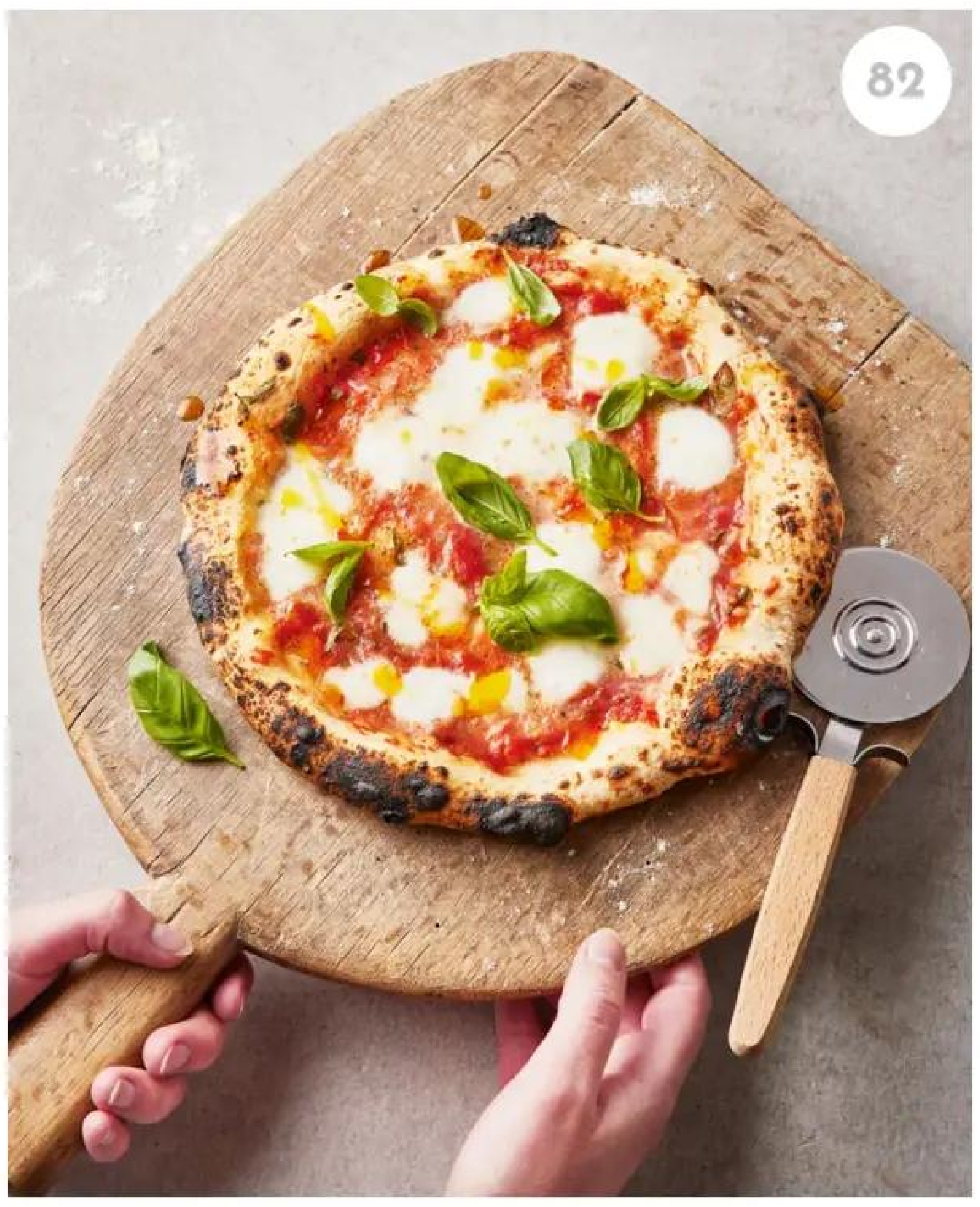
68 THE DOLOMITES
Italy's mountains offer adventure come snow or sun

Images Getty Images, Alamy, Hannah Hughes (pizza)

CONTENTS

UTO

74


82

98

120

78

112

116

CULTURE

72 LA BELLA LINGUA ITALIANA
Understanding the complexity and beauty of this Romance language

74 GALATEO ITALIANO
Discover why etiquette in Italy is a true art form

78 A TASTE OF ITALY
Pull up a seat to find out all about Italy's unique love affair with food

82 MARGHERITA PIZZA
Recreate a classic Neapolitan-style pizza at home

84 BOLOGNESE
This makes a great budget-friendly change from a classic Bolognese

85 PARMIGIANA
A one-pot dinner that delivers maximum flavour on minimum effort

86 BRUSCHETTA
This classic Italian appetiser or snack is easy to make

87 TIRAMISU
The mascarpone and whisked eggs give an authentic richness

88 GRAPE EXPECTATIONS
Gen up on Italian vino with our guide to the nation's wine regions

90 SPIRITUALITY MEETS SECULAR
How religion is intertwined with the Italian way of life

92 SPORT IN ITALY
Learn about Italy's love for fast cars and slow football

94 THE ITALIAN 'MAFIA'
The true story of Italy's organised criminal enterprise uncovered

ART & ARCHITECTURE

98 24 RENAISSANCE TREASURES
From majestic cathedrals to visionary paintings

108 10 WORLD HERITAGE SITES YOU MIGHT MISS (BUT SHOULDN'T)
Discover the underrated gems of Italy's incredible cultural landscape

112 MADE IN ITALY
The timeless appeal of Italian fashion, craft and culture

114 MUSIC & ITALY
Italy's musical legacy – from Paganini to Pavarotti, and from pianofortes to Pausini

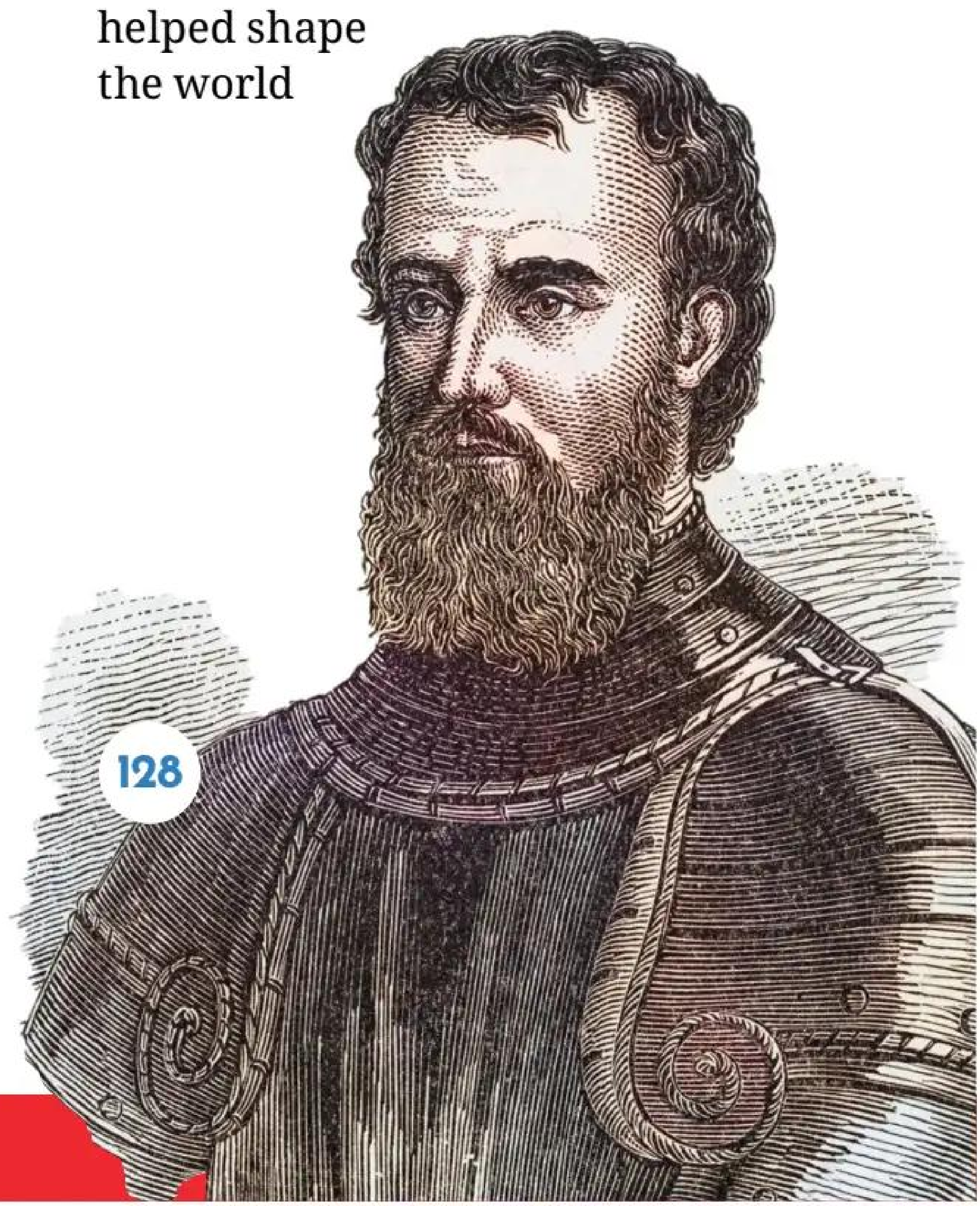
116 NARRATING A NATION
Discover the rise, rhythm and lasting cultural heritage of Italian cinema

INVENTIONS

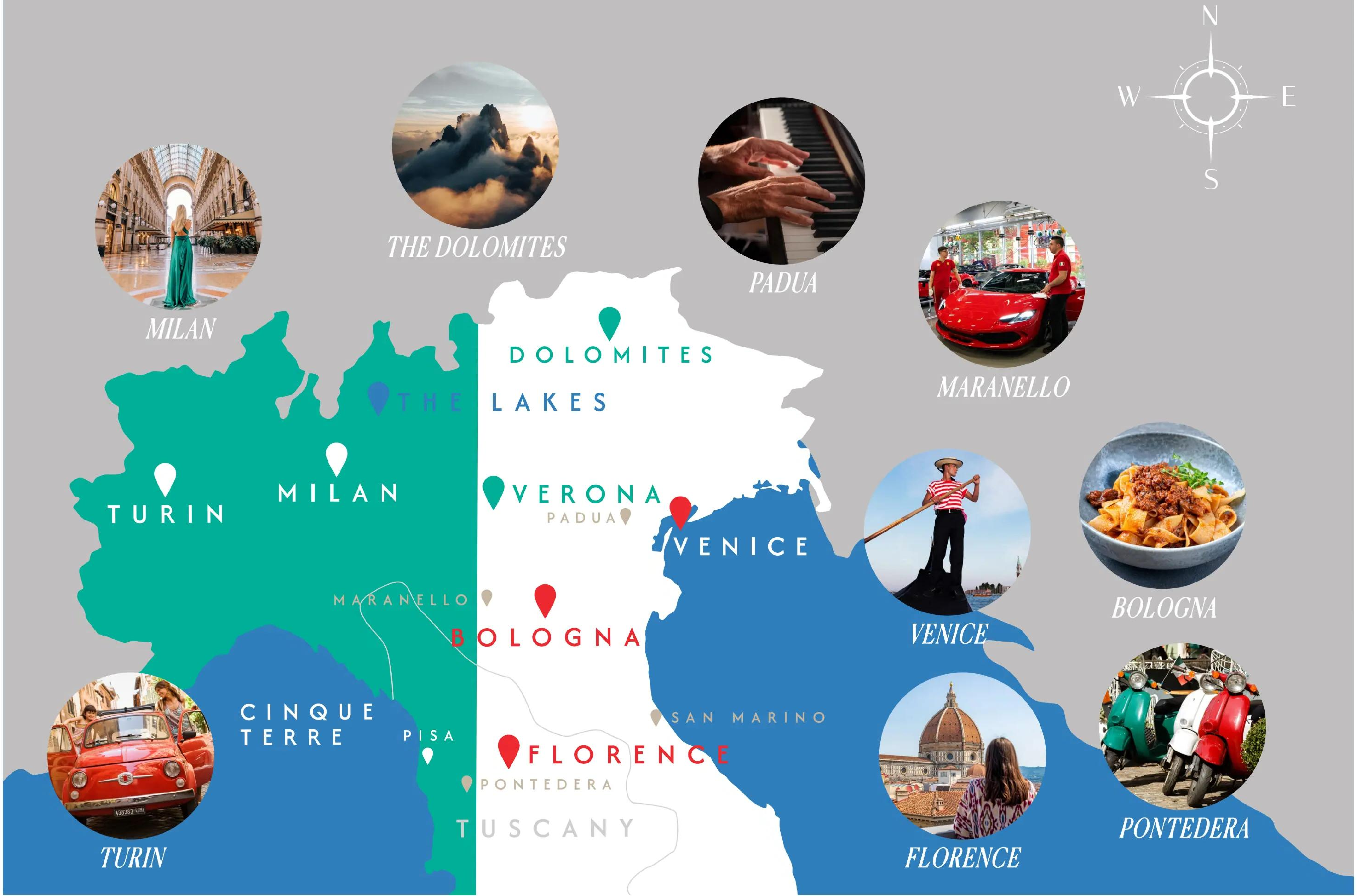
120 ICONS ON WHEELS
Why the Ferrari and Vespa are more than just modes of transport in Italy

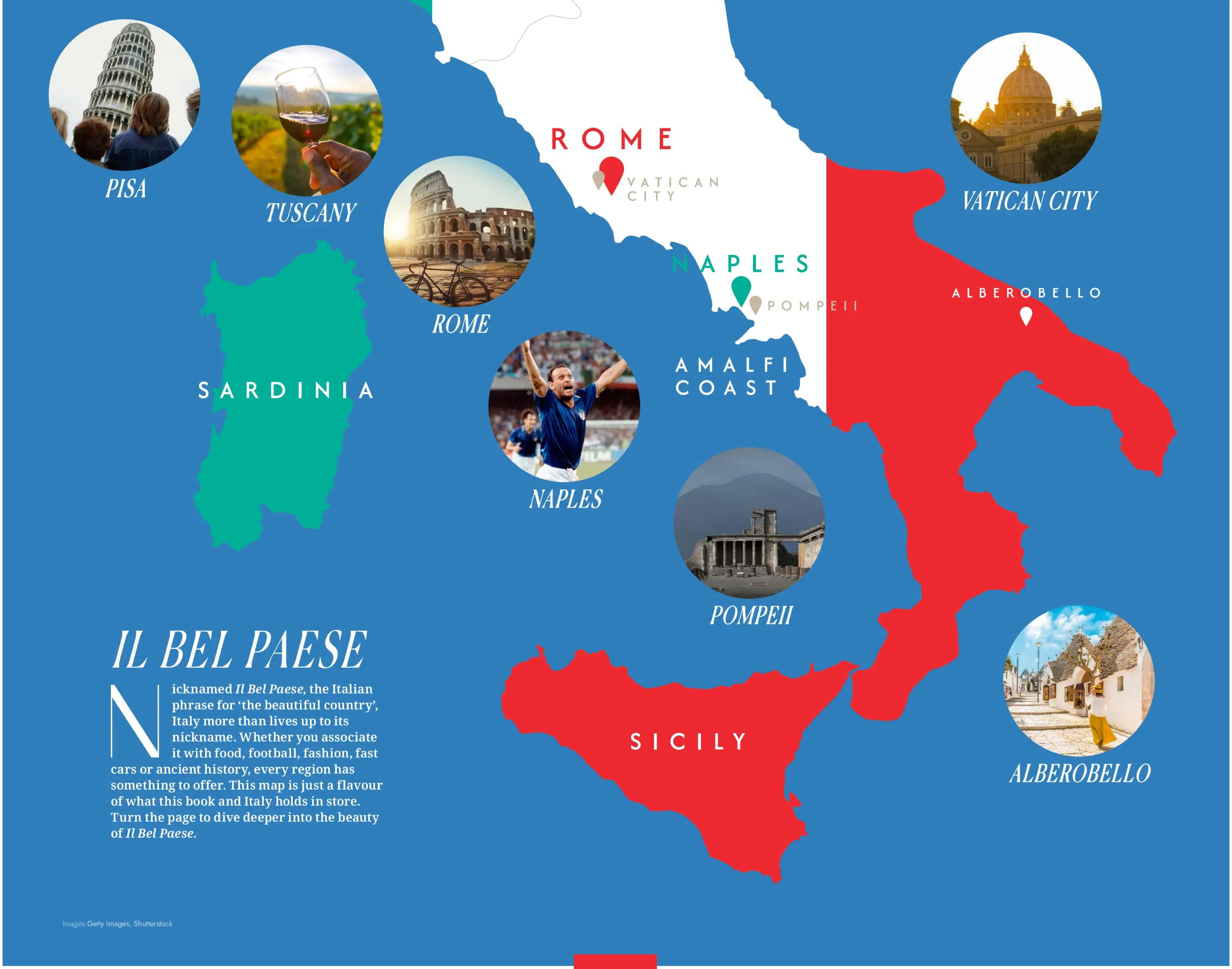
124 10 BEST ITALIAN INVENTIONS
From thermometers and typewriters to microchips

128 ITALY'S GREAT EXPLORERS
Meet the pioneers who helped shape the world


128

ITALIA


N
W
E
S
MILAN
THE DOLOMITES
PADUA
MARANELLO
DOLOMITES
THE LAKES
TURIN
MILAN
VERONA
PADUA
VENICE
MARANELLO
BOLOGNA
CINQUE TERRE
PISA
SAN MARINO
FLORENCE
PONTEDERA
TUSCANY
VENICE
BOLOGNA
TURIN
FLORENCE
PONTEDERA


PISA
TUSCANY
ROME
VATICAN CITY
NAPLES
POMPEII
AMALFI COAST
ALBEROBELLO
VATICAN CITY
SARDINIA
ROME
NAPLES
POMPEII
SICILY
ALBEROBELLO

IL BEL PAESE

Nicknamed *Il Bel Paese*, the Italian phrase for 'the beautiful country', Italy more than lives up to its nickname. Whether you associate it with food, football, fashion, fast cars or ancient history, every region has something to offer. This map is just a flavour of what this book and Italy holds in store. Turn the page to dive deeper into the beauty of *Il Bel Paese*.

Images Getty Images, Shutterstock

Image Getty Images

TORIA

HISTORY

EARLY ITALY

BEFORE THE ROMAN EMPIRE, THE ITALIAN PENINSULA HAD ALREADY SEEN THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF DIFFERENT CULTURES AND INNOVATIONS

WORDS MARK DOLAN

While Italy boasts one of the world's most famous ancient cultures – the Romans – the peninsula had been occupied for thousands of years before the Roman Empire was established. At least 45,000 years ago, there were humans in what is now Italy, living nomadic lives until the Neolithic arrived 8,000 years ago. Changes occurred rapidly, often sparked by the influence of people from other regions of the world, and society was transformed. In the centuries before the advent of the Romans, the peninsula was home to dozens of regional societies, all of whom had their own ways of life. This timeline will give you a whistle-stop tour through 6,000 years of history, from the earliest farmers, via the Etruscans, to the beginning of the Roman Republic.

THE NEOLITHIC ARRIVES c.6200-5700 BCE

Starting in the south, Italy enters the Neolithic, with nomadic groups becoming sedentary, domesticating plants and animals and producing new objects, including pottery and polished stone tools. The change was likely sparked by incoming groups from nearby regions who landed on the peninsula and began to settle there.

6200 BCE

SMALL GROUPS AND THEIR BEAKERS

Bell Beaker culture spreads throughout the Italian peninsula, but its many small independent communities live differently, each influenced by both foreign and local cultures, people and traditions.

2500-2200 BCE

FIRST METAL

The Chalcolithic (Copper Age) sees the development of metalworking, and with it, greater social stratification, gendered norms and 'warrior' burials.

c.3650-2200 BCE

THE PRE-APENNINE PERIOD

This Early-Middle Bronze Age culture of southern Italy used natural caves extensively, as settlements, burial places, and areas for cult and ritual practices.

2200-1500 BCE

1700 BCE

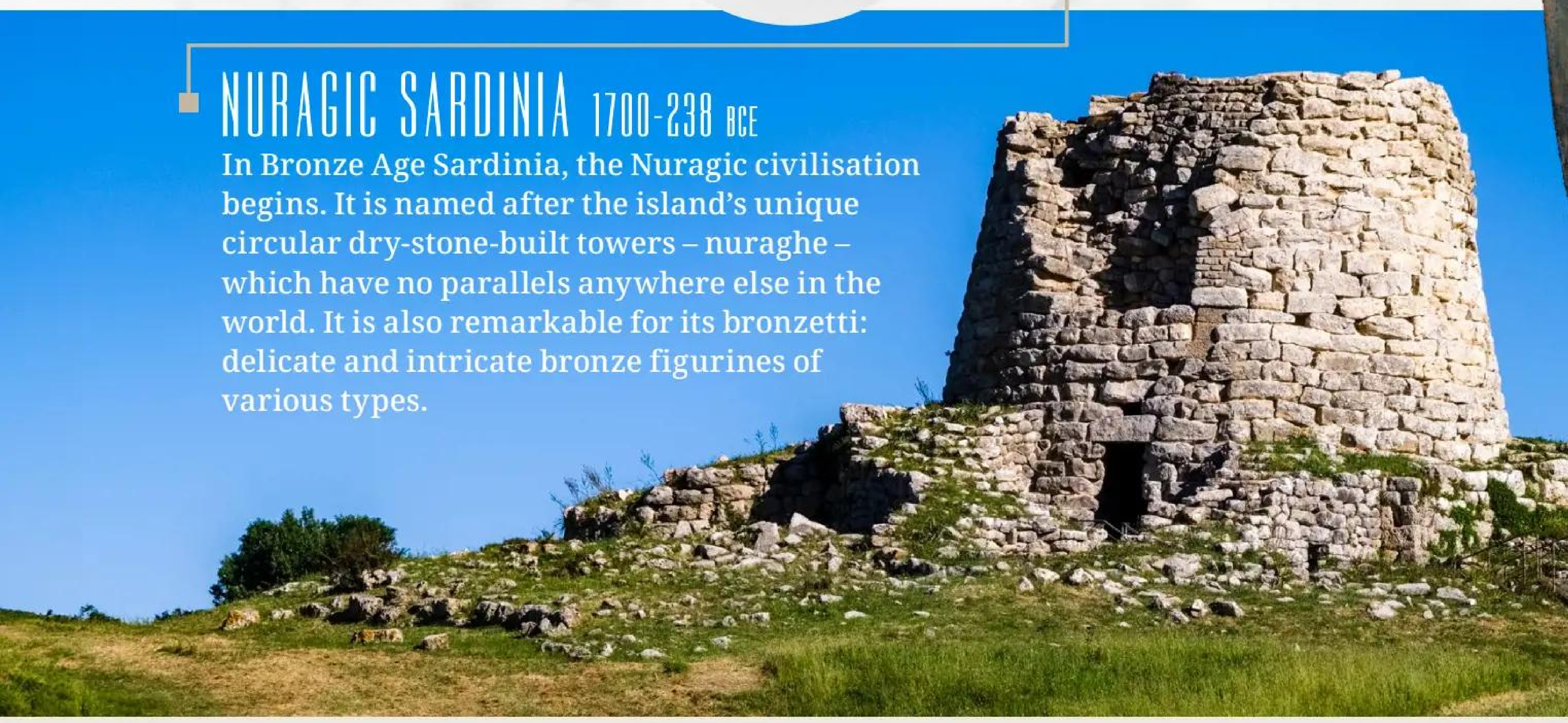
THE APENNINE PERIOD

The Apennine culture spreads throughout the whole peninsula, characterised by greater trade links with the Aegean and a growing emphasis on weapons in burials.

1500-1350 BCE

NURAGIC SARDINIA 1700-238 BCE

In Bronze Age Sardinia, the Nuragic civilisation begins. It is named after the island's unique circular dry-stone-built towers – nuraghe – which have no parallels anywhere else in the world. It is also remarkable for its bronzetti: delicate and intricate bronze figurines of various types.



PROTO-VILLANOVAN CULTURE 1100-900 BCE

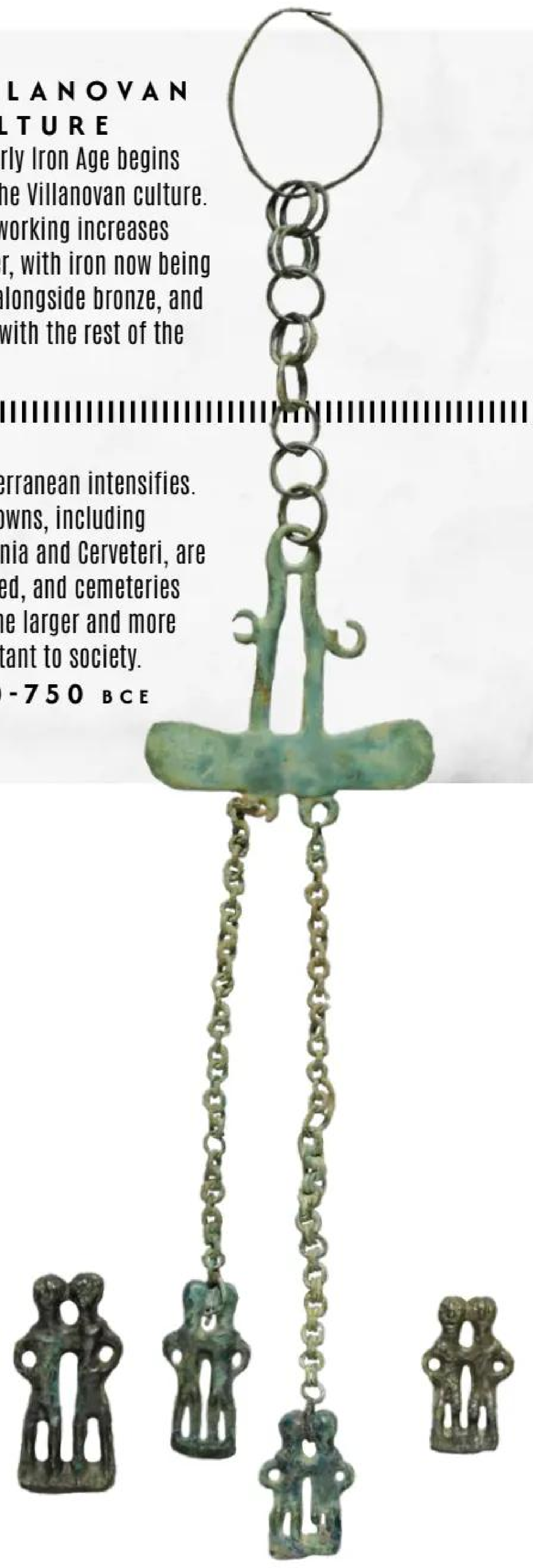
At the end of the Bronze Age, the Proto-Villanovan culture dominated Italy and saw increased production of metalwork, greater trade with the rest of Europe and the Mediterranean, and changing traditions; cremation replaced burial as the dominant funerary rite, and ceramics became more decorative.

1100 BCE

VILLANOVAN CULTURE

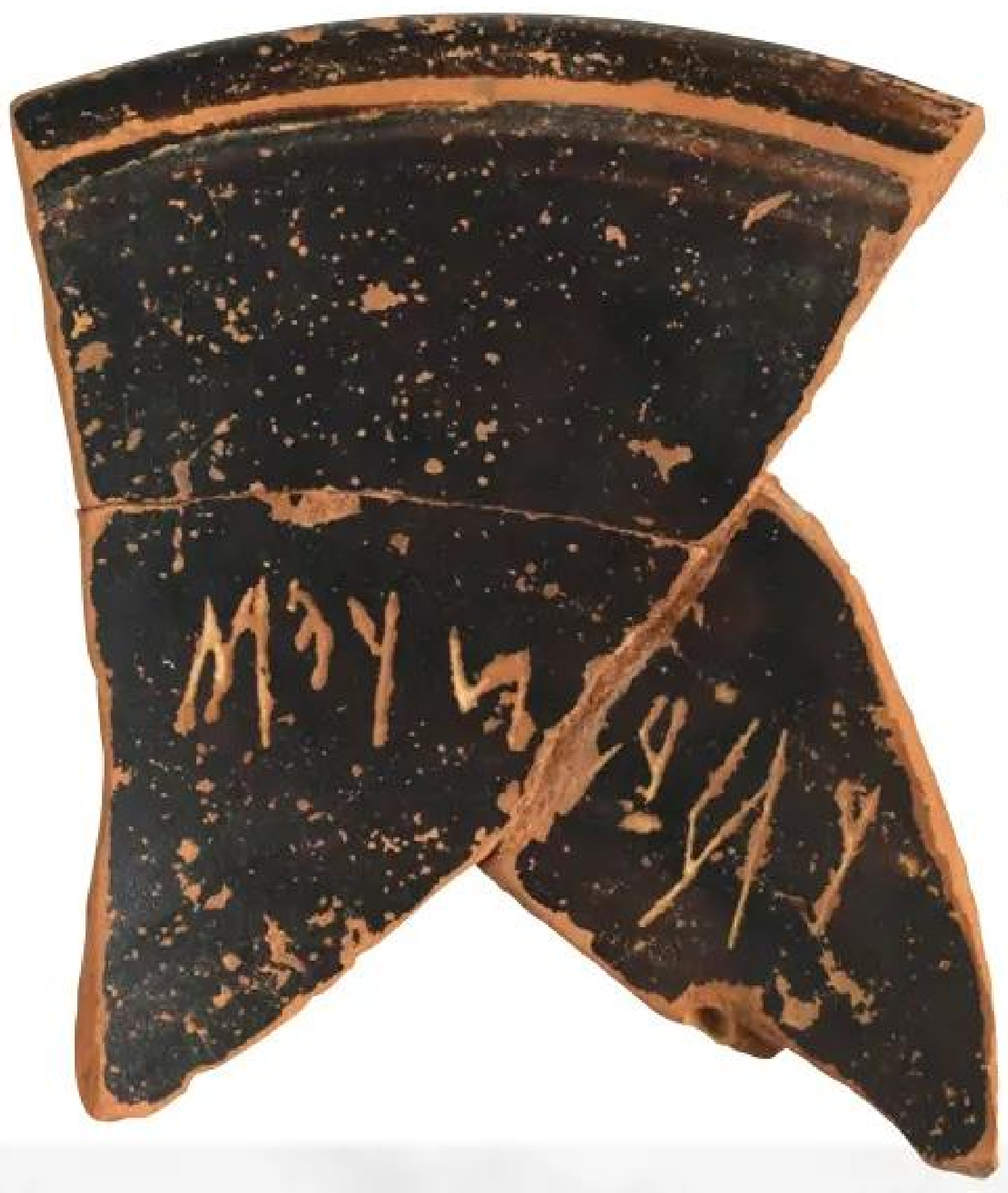
The Early Iron Age begins with the Villanovan culture. Metalworking increases further, with iron now being used alongside bronze, and trade with the rest of the Mediterranean intensifies. New towns, including Tarquinia and Cerveteri, are founded, and cemeteries become larger and more important to society.

900-750 BCE



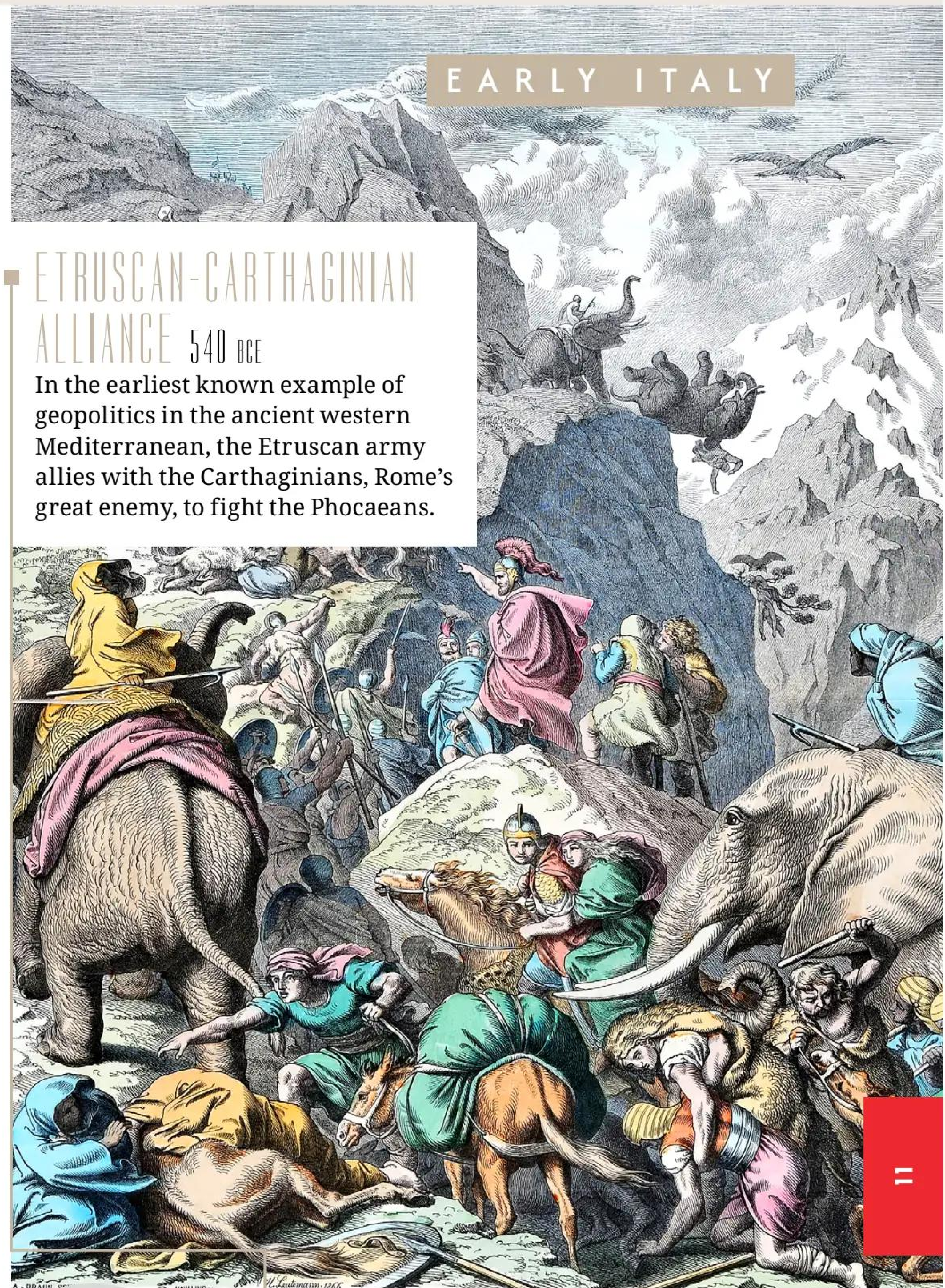
THE LEGENDARY FOUNDING OF ROME 753 BCE

According to legend, the city of Rome is founded by Romulus and Remus, beginning the Regal Period. The Etruscan civilisation is nearing its peak at the same time.



FIRST ETRUSCAN INSCRIPTIONS c.700 BCE

The Etruscan language has no known relatives, but in the 7th century BCE, Etruscans adopted and tweaked the Euboean Greek alphabet to write in, sometimes reversing the characters.



ETRUSCAN-CARTHAGINIAN ALLIANCE 540 BCE

In the earliest known example of geopolitics in the ancient western Mediterranean, the Etruscan army allies with the Carthaginians, Rome's great enemy, to fight the Phocaeans.

753 BCE

THE VENETI

One of the best-known pre-Roman Italic cultures, the Veneti are best known for their beautifully decorated bronze situlae - intricate bucket-shaped objects often used for burial.

c.900-182 BCE

GREEKS ARRIVE

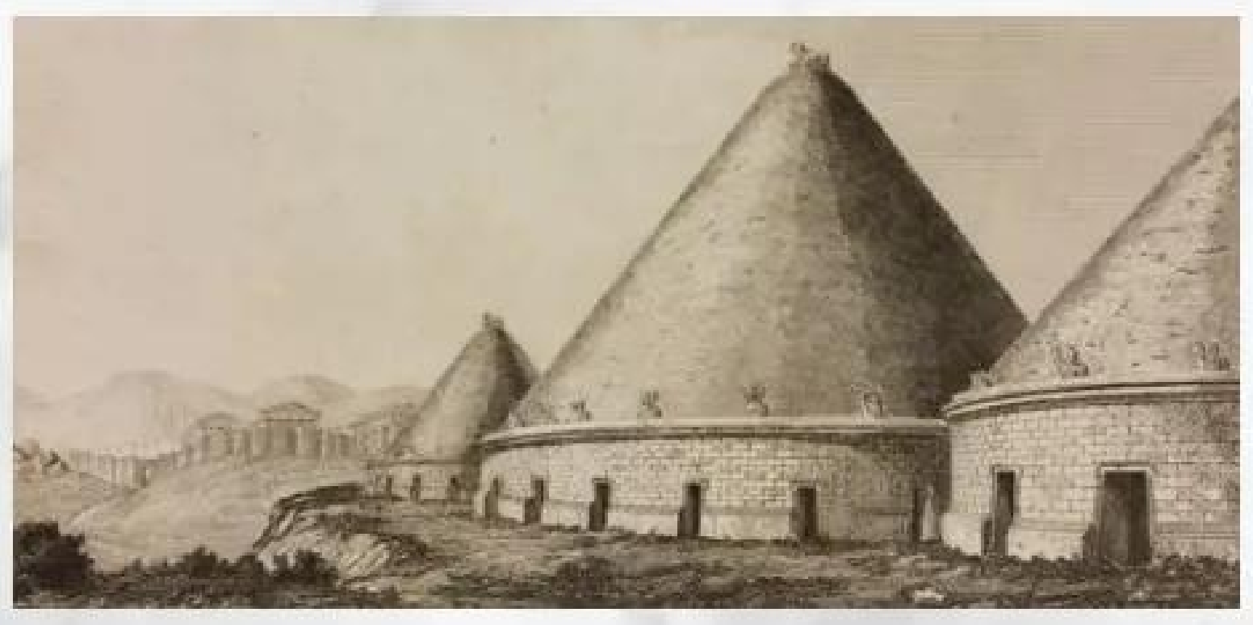
Settlers from Greece arrive in Italy (the start of the Magna Graecia colonization period) and begin founding settlements, including Naxos on Sicily and Cumae in the Bay of Naples.

c.750 BCE

THE ETRUSCANS

By the mid-8th century, the Villanovan culture has gone through the 'Orientalising' period, strongly influenced by Eastern cultures, and matured into the Etruscan civilisation. One of the great cultural, economic and military powers of the ancient world, they produced artistic and architectural masterpieces and dominated the Italian peninsula.

c.750 BCE



700 BCE

ETRUSCAN CEMETERIES

In the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, the famous tombs at Tarquinia and Cerveteri see their grandest tombs constructed. Some feature painted frescoes now considered masterpieces, while others recreated the interiors of contemporary Etruscan houses, due to their strong belief in an afterlife.

c.700-500 BCE

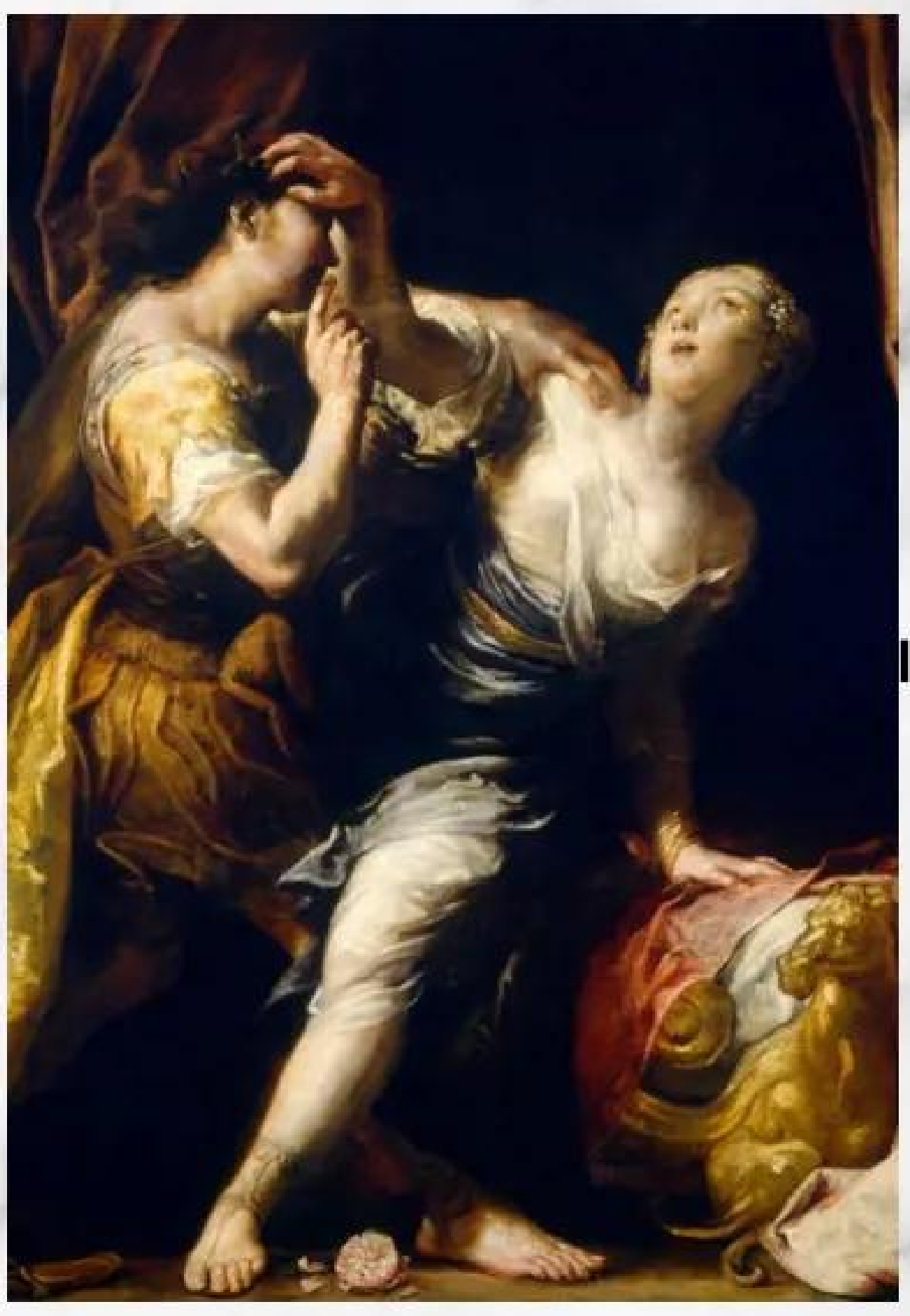
540 BCE

THE ETRUSCANS LOSE ROME

The last Kings of Rome were Etruscan, but after the rape of Lucretia by Tarquinius Sextus, the Roman people rebelled and expelled them from the city.

509 BCE

509 BCE



THE ROMAN REPUBLIC IS FOUNDED 509 BCE

After the fall of the Roman Kingdom and expulsion of its Etruscan king, the Roman Republic is founded and the long period of Roman domination begins.

Images Getty Images, Alamy

THE ROM

ROME GREW FROM A SMALL CITY BESIDE THE TIBER IN ITALY TO BECOME MASTER OF THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

WORDS MARC DeSANTIS

AN EMPIRE

Like most empires, Rome's was born in blood. At first just a little city astride the Tiber River in central Italy surrounded by enemies, Rome relentlessly expanded. Guided by the Senate, it brought the other Latin peoples of Italy into a tight federation, and by the 3rd century BCE, it had humbled the Samnites of central Italy and the Etruscans to the north.

Expansion of the Republic of Rome further north brought the Romans into conflict with the Gauls, a Celtic people who lived in northern Italy and modern-day France, with ferocious wars being fought. In the south, the Romans came into contact with the Greeks of southern Italy, who had settled the coastal regions in centuries past. The general and king of the Molossian tribe, Pyrrhus of Epirus, came to the aid of his countrymen, but even his victories over the tough and obstinate Romans proved too costly for him to continue.

By 264 BCE, in the first of three bitter conflicts, Rome was at war with Carthage over the control of Sicily. Rome eventually prevailed, but only after an immensely costly struggle that lasted 23 years. A second war with Carthage, begun by its most famous son, the brilliant general Hannibal, saw Roman armies smashed and Italy invaded. Despite Hannibal's hammer blows and a war that encompassed virtually the entire western Mediterranean, Rome endured and defeated Carthage after 16 blood-soaked years.

In 146 BCE, Roman vengeance would see Carthage destroyed utterly in the third and final war with the North African empire. Rome's imperial interests had by this time grown to embrace the whole of the Mediterranean. Wars came with the grand Hellenistic Greek empires that had emerged from the wreckage of Alexander the Great's world empire of the 4th century BCE. The Macedonian, Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires were wealthy, culturally sophisticated and militarily powerful. Rome overcame them all.

Success brought its own problems, though. By the 2nd century BCE, Italy was awash in loot gained from its defeated Greek rivals as well as slaves drawn from across the Mediterranean and beyond, all taken by Rome's victorious legions. Yet inequality was now skyrocketing. Attempts at reform were stymied by the rich and powerful, who benefitted from the current system. Landless, impoverished peasants, who used to provide Rome with its citizen legionaries, were now thrown off their land because they were unable to pay their debts, replaced by slaves who worked giant estates owned by the wealthy. The poverty-stricken free farmers found their way to Rome, where they swelled the population and augmented the great mass of the urban poor.

ROCKY FOUNDATION

Nevertheless, Rome continued to expand, but cracks in the Republic's foundations began to appear in increasing number. There were civil wars with former allies and between rival generals. By the turn of the 1st century BCE, ultra-rich Roman aristocrats were leading armies composed of men too poor to buy their own weapons and armour. These men came to rely on their generals to look out for their welfare once they were discharged, not the government of Rome, where the Senate had become riven by bitter factionalism. A government fit for a city was proving incapable of minding what had become a world empire stretching from Spain to Palestine. Ambitious generals backed by armies loyal more to them than to Rome, such as Marius and Sulla, asserted themselves to Rome's detriment.

Foremost among these was Julius Caesar. Though something of a reformer, Caesar was mainly looking out for himself, and made his decisions accordingly. When his political opponents in the Senate wanted to prosecute him, he naturally refused to relinquish his military command and instead led his legions in an invasion of Italy. Caesar was victorious over the Senatorial faction that opposed him, and though he never made himself king, he

Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, put the empire on a stable foundation that helped it survive for centuries after

Image Alamy

EXPANSION OF THE EMPIRE

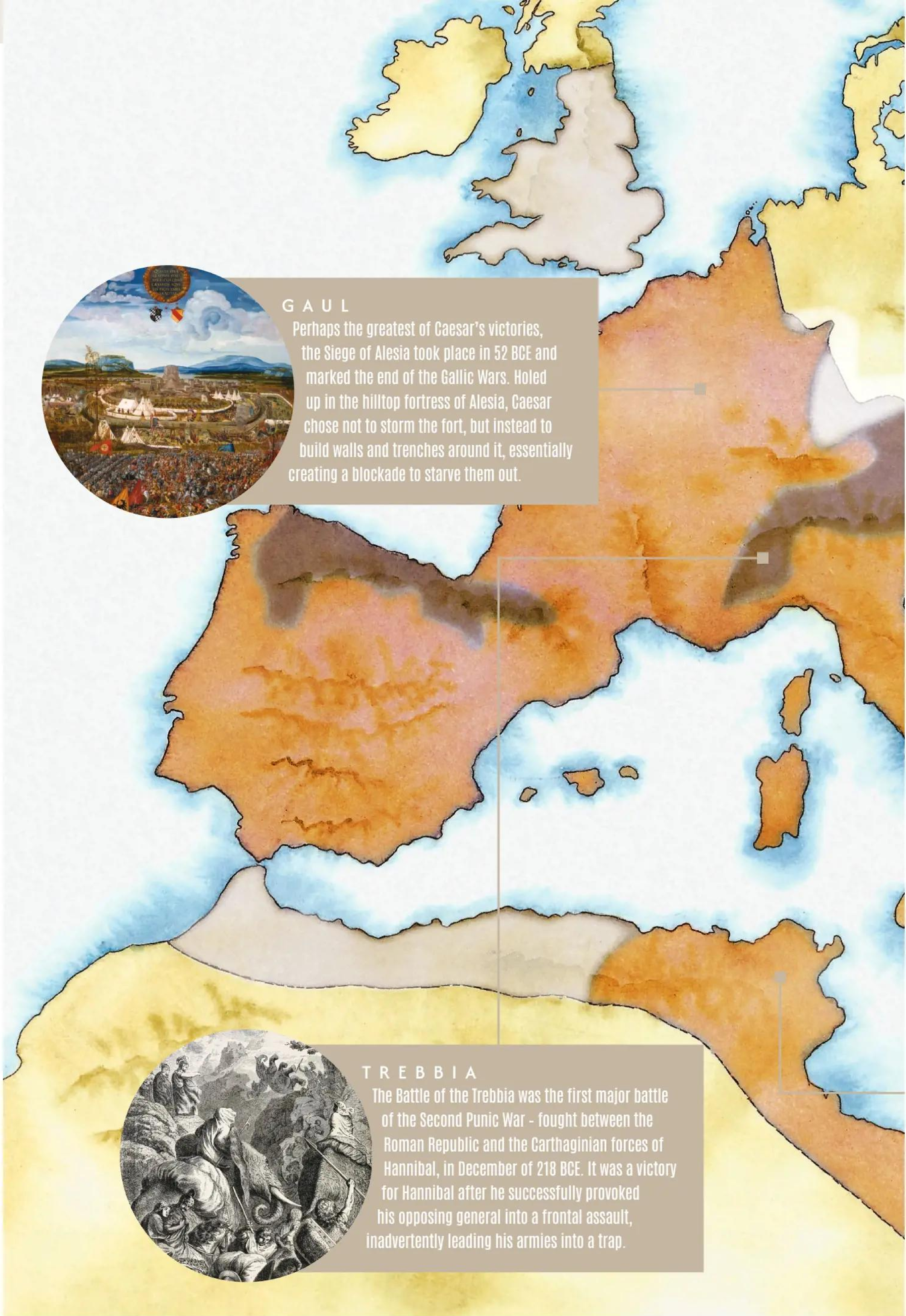
How Rome came, saw and conquered: the rundown of all the territories Rome gained over time

5th century BCE	Italian Peninsula
4th century BCE	Sudan
4th century BCE	Tunisia
4th century BCE	Morocco
4th century BCE	Southern France
4th century BCE	Spain
1st century BCE	Northern France
1st century BCE	Greece
1st century BCE	Turkey
1st century BCE	Egypt
1st century CE	Britannia
1st century CE	Dacia (Romania)
2nd century CE	Armenia
2nd century CE	Thrace (Bulgaria)

● Roman Republic territories up to the death of Caesar (44 BCE)

● Additional Roman Empire territories up to the death of Augustus (14 CE)

● Additional Roman Empire territories up to the death of Trajan (117 CE)



GAUL

Perhaps the greatest of Caesar's victories, the Siege of Alesia took place in 52 BCE and marked the end of the Gallic Wars. Holed up in the hilltop fortress of Alesia, Caesar chose not to storm the fort, but instead to build walls and trenches around it, essentially creating a blockade to starve them out.

TREBBIA

The Battle of the Trebbia was the first major battle of the Second Punic War - fought between the Roman Republic and the Carthaginian forces of Hannibal, in December of 218 BCE. It was a victory for Hannibal after he successfully provoked his opposing general into a frontal assault, inadvertently leading his armies into a trap.

ruled as a dictator until his assassination in March 44 BCE.

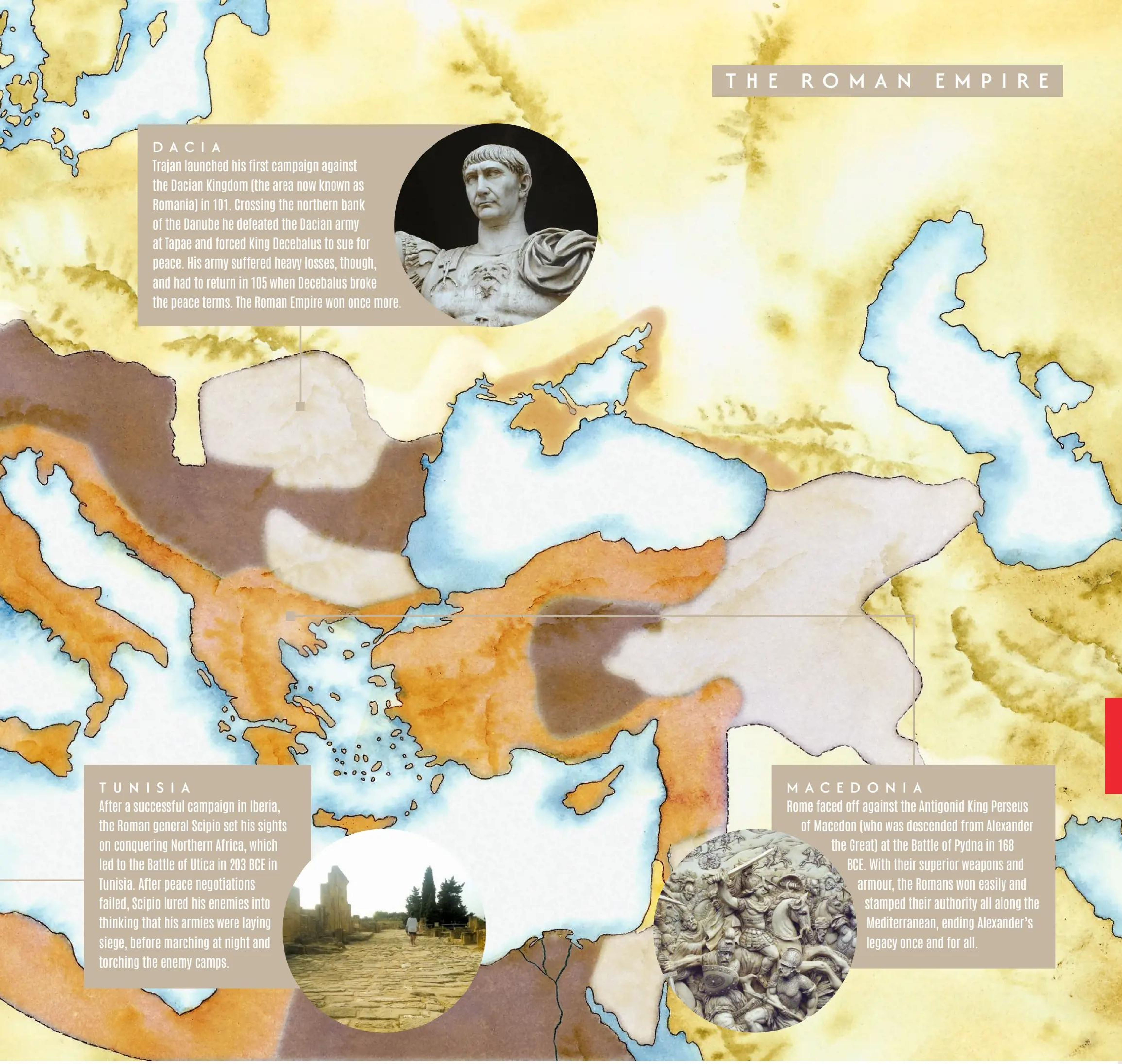
ROME'S FIRST EMPEROR

Civil war came to Rome once more. After years of brutal struggle, Caesar's grandnephew and adoptive son and heir, Octavian, triumphed over Mark Antony and his lover, the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra. The Republic was his, but it was exhausted by war, and Octavian, who now took the title Augustus, or 'eminent one', began to reorganise it so as to heal its many hurts. He went about this in a clever manner, always seeking to cloak the extent of his immense political power behind a façade of Republican propriety. Augustus paid the senators – eager for peace after years of civil war – much courtesy and allowed them to partake in imperial governance by governing provinces. However, he kept the important provinces and military commands in his own hands.

One of the titles he took for himself, hailing from the time of the Republic, was *imperator*, meaning 'commander'. This word was used by legionaries to salute a victorious general, and it reflected Augustus's control of the army. It is from *imperator* that the modern English word 'emperor' descends. Though Rome had long maintained an empire, dating back to the third century BCE, it is only with the accession of Augustus in 27 BCE that modern historians mark the start of the 'Roman Empire'. Augustus, however, claimed only to be the *princeps* – the first man in Rome – not a royal monarch. The early empire is often called the 'Principate' for this reason.

At its height, the empire would embrace between 70 and 90 million people, most of whom were non-Italians. The security of the empire was upheld by its well-drilled legions, which were distributed around the periphery of the empire by Augustus. For his own protection he created the Praetorian Guard. Imperial borders were defended by about 150,000 legionaries and an equivalent number of non-citizen auxiliary troops.

It was one of Augustus's great achievements that he was able to discharge so many of the



DACIA

Trajan launched his first campaign against the Dacian Kingdom (the area now known as Romania) in 101. Crossing the northern bank of the Danube he defeated the Dacian army at Tapae and forced King Decebalus to sue for peace. His army suffered heavy losses, though, and had to return in 105 when Decebalus broke the peace terms. The Roman Empire won once more.

TUNISIA

After a successful campaign in Iberia, the Roman general Scipio set his sights on conquering Northern Africa, which led to the Battle of Utica in 203 BCE in Tunisia. After peace negotiations failed, Scipio lured his enemies into thinking that his armies were laying siege, before marching at night and torching the enemy camps.

MACEDONIA

Rome faced off against the Antigonid King Perseus of Macedon (who was descended from Alexander the Great) at the Battle of Pydna in 168 BCE. With their superior weapons and armour, the Romans easily and stamped their authority all along the Mediterranean, ending Alexander's legacy once and for all.

troops who had fought in the gigantic armies of the civil wars of the late Republic. What Augustus did was always with an eye on improving the security and stability of the empire over which he presided. He was not interested in further conquest, for the empire was already tremendous; rather he wanted a peaceful state that was secure within its own sprawling borders.

The stability that Augustus's legions were able to enforce on the Roman world was comprehensive enough that the period following Augustus's coming to sole power in 27 BCE and lasting until the late 2nd century CE, has become known as the *Pax Romana*, or 'Roman Peace'.

SUCCESSION WOES

The Julio-Claudian emperors, named after the dynasty that Augustus founded, were something of a mixed bag. Augustus's effort to ensure a stable succession after he was gone was not easy. His first choices would have been his grandsons, Gaius and Lucius, but these both died young, with Augustus deeply saddened by his loss. With few good options left, he made Tiberius, his stepson by his wife, Livia, his adoptive son and heir.

Tiberius would succeed Augustus in 14 CE. He was an unhappy man but a generally effective ruler. The Praetorians, who had hitherto been wholly loyal to Augustus, would prove to be troublesome, and their meddling in the imperial succession – made possible by their close proximity to the throne – would bode ill for the future of the empire. His successor, Caligula, was greeted with much enthusiasm when he took the throne, but the young man soon showed himself to be mentally unstable and he was assassinated by his own Praetorians in 41 CE.

The Praetorians then chose Claudius, who ruled well until 54 CE, when he was followed by his stepson, Nero. As a hellenophile, Nero was infatuated with the arts and was an enthusiastic singer, musician and actor, paying little heed to anything else. There were serious revolts in both Britain and Judaea during his reign, and he was also blamed for

Images Getty Images (map), wiki/Ghabara CC BY-SA 4.0 (Tunisia), wiki/CC BY-SA 3.0 (Macedonia), wiki/Thomas Ihle CC BY-SA 3.0 (Dacia)

the outbreak of a massive fire in the city of Rome in 64 CE that he then tried to blame on the Christians, adherents of a relatively new religious sect established in Rome.

MORE CIVIL WAR

Civil war would ever be the bane of Rome. One of the most dramatic and terrifying was that of 69 CE, the Year of the Four Emperors. Nero was deeply unpopular and the end of his reign was riven by revolts and conspiracies against him. The Praetorian Guard had become disenchanted with him and picked another man, Galba, to be his replacement. When Galba was confirmed by the Senate, Nero committed suicide. The Julio-Claudian dynasty founded by Augustus a century before had come to an end.

Galba did not last long. His penny-pinching and cruelty alienated many of his supporters and unhappy Praetorians murdered him after a reign of just six months. His successor, Otho, was defeated by Vitellius and he committed suicide after a reign of only three months. Then legions under the command of generals loyal to Vespasian, the commander of Rome's Eastern legions, defeated Vitellius's legions in battle in Italy and Vitellius was slain. Vespasian, who was in Judaea, was recognised as Rome's new emperor.

Rome recovered from the turmoil that attended Nero's demise. Vespasian, his son Titus and his younger son Domitian, together forming the Flavians, were capable rulers and they ushered in a century of overall peace and stability for Rome. Domitian was unpopular, and with his death there came a succession of much better-liked rulers who were as a group called the 'Good Emperors'. The first was Nerva, who adopted as his son and heir the grown warrior-emperor Trajan, who in his turn adopted Hadrian, who adopted Antoninus Pius, who adopted the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius.

The adoption of a capable adult man as heir was a beneficial method to ensure an orderly succession and that the empire was entrusted to sure hands. This period was the Golden Age of Imperial Rome. Unfortunately though, it did not last. During the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the first of the great barbarian invasions of Rome began. Marcus, a fundamentally contemplative and peaceful man, was compelled by circumstance to spend much of his reign in military encampments on the Danubian frontier fending off the invasions of the Germanic Marcomanni and Quadi peoples.

Marcus was largely successful in this, but his selection of his own biological son, Commodus, as his heir was not a good one. Commodus was more interested in fighting in the arena as a gladiator than in ruling the empire. He was assassinated in 192. The Praetorian Guard, arrogant and greedy, then auctioned off the throne to the highest bidder. Commodus's death brought a return to civil war that only came to an end in 193 with the triumph of Septimius Severus, commander of

BECOMING ROMANS

Many non-Roman peoples adopted Roman language and customs during the long centuries of imperial rule

The Romans were, broadly speaking, open to the inclusion of non-Romans into their state. They were certainly more willing to grant citizenship to foreigners than other civilisations , such as the Athenians, Spartans or Carthaginians. This helped to bring the non-Roman peoples of Italy into the Roman fold and weld them into one people.

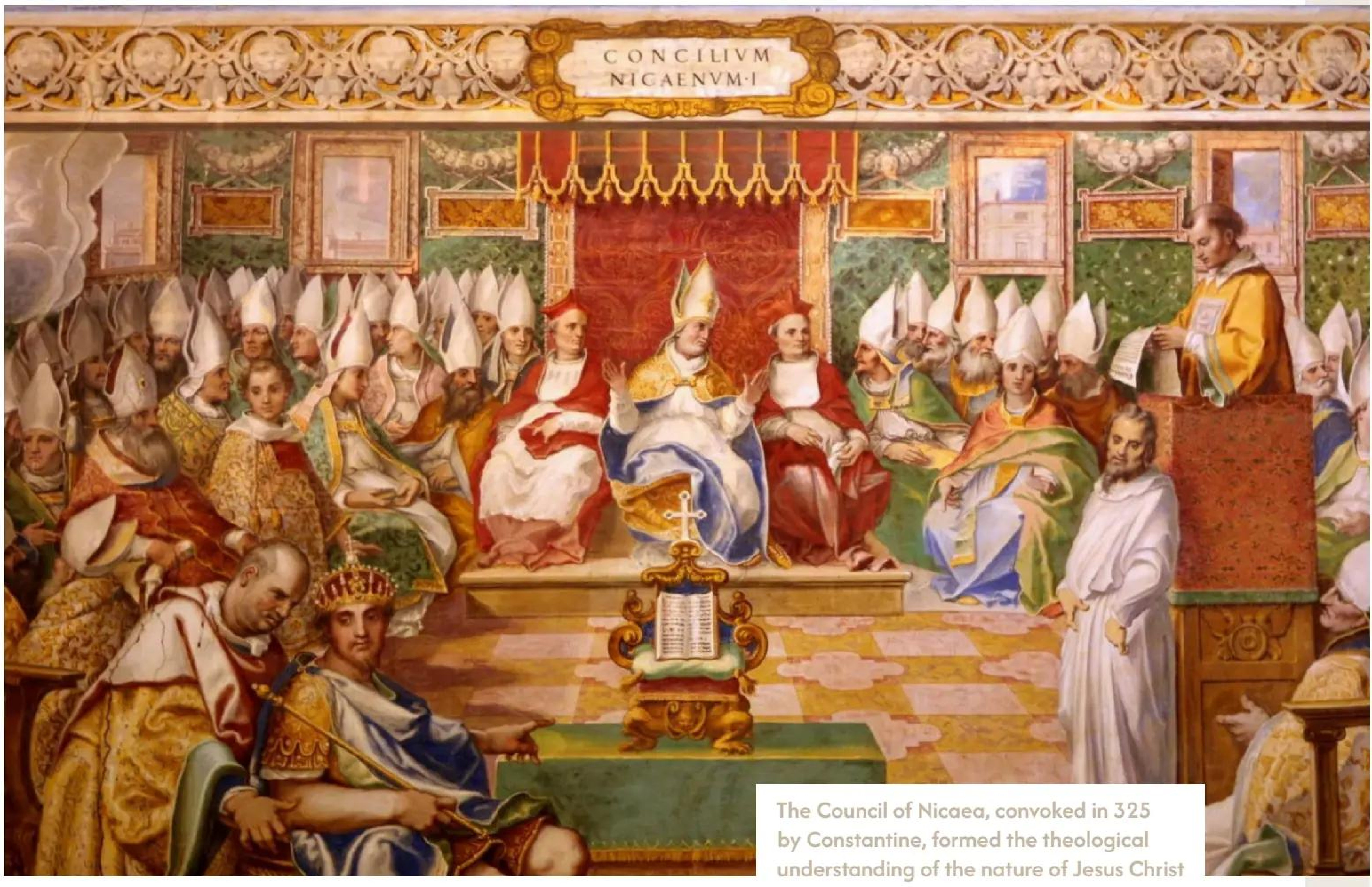
Outside of Italy, many peoples, such as the Gauls and the Iberians, adopted the Latin language as their own. This is why languages such as French, Spanish and Portuguese, as well as Italian, all descended from Latin, and are together known as Romance languages.

Romanisation across the empire more broadly was accelerated by the presence of Roman legions in the fortified camps that grew into cities, many of which are still in existence today. Certain fortunate provincials managed to acquire citizenship, largely through military service. Provincials were in time admitted into the Roman Senate, and emperors were also drawn from outside Italy, such as Trajan.

Emperor Caracalla made all the people of the empire into Roman citizens in 212 when he granted citizenship to all free inhabitants. It is said that Caracalla's prime motivation was to increase imperial revenue by increasing the number of citizens liable for the payment of certain taxes.

Whatever their ethnic origins, those who wanted to be considered Roman adopted the common Greco-Roman culture and values of the empire, which included the Greek and Latin languages and its art, literature and urban living.

Caracalla in his Constitutio Antoniniana made all free inhabitants of the empire Roman citizens



The Council of Nicaea, convoked in 325 by Constantine, formed the theological understanding of the nature of Jesus Christ

the Danubian legions, over his rival generals, Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus.

Severus brought security to the empire, but he was also a realist. He told his sons and successors of the 'Severan' dynasty, Caracalla and Geta, to stick together, pay the soldiers and forget everything else. It was not bad advice, but it highlighted how Rome was, at root, a military monarchy, despite its very civilian trappings, and that control over the army was all-important for maintaining political power.

AN EMPIRE IN CRISIS

The mounting security problems on Rome's frontiers, seen first during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and kept in check for so long, would burst their bounds after the 235 assassination of Alexander Severus, the last of the Severan dynasty. The catastrophe that ensued over the next half century (235–84) has become known as the 'Crisis of the Third Century'. The empire was beset by foreign invasions, internal rebellions and usurpations by ambitious generals. All of these weakened the empire, which threatened to fall apart on several occasions. Goths (Germanic barbarians from the steppes of modern southern Russia) marauded over the frontiers and burst upon the Mediterranean, raiding far and wide in their boats.

In the East, the weak Parthian Arsacid dynasty was replaced by the vigorous and aggressive Sassanids, with their homeland in Persia, who assumed control over the old Parthian empire. The Sassanids were better organised than their Parthian predecessors, and their kings led many invasions of Rome's eastern provinces. The grand city of Antioch was sacked in 253, and in an abject humiliation, a Roman emperor, Valerian, was taken captive in battle by the Persians in 260 at Edessa in modern Turkey.

> THE EMPIRE WAS BESET BY INVASIONS, REBELLIONS AND USURPATIONS BY AMBITIOUS GENERALS

The construction of the famed Colosseum was started in 70 CE during the reign of Vespasian

The extreme pressures on the frontiers and the inability of Rome's central government caused some provinces to look to their own defence. Britain and Gaul were effectively independent for a time, as was Syria and much else of the Roman East, which was defended successfully by Queen Zenobia of Palmyra in modern Syria.

After decades of hard, seemingly interminable fighting and much bloodshed, the empire would be saved by capable soldier-emperors from its rougher but tougher Danubian provinces. These Illyrians, as they were called, took Rome's battered armies in hand, welded them into fighting shape and turned back the foreign assaults. The Senate, Rome's traditional source of legitimacy, was by this time a shadow of its former self; the Illyrian emperors largely bypassed it. Among them was Gallienus (who reigned from 253-68), the son of the captured Valerian. He won a huge victory over the Goths at Naissus in 268. The crisis began to fade decisively with the coming to power of Emperor Aurelian (ruler of Rome from 270–75). In 272 he defeated Zenobia and brought the wealthy eastern provinces back into the Roman fold. By 274, he had also reincorporated Gaul. To protect the city of Rome itself he built a wall around it, which is still known as the Aurelian Wall. Symptomatic of the political instability, even this successful general was vulnerable, eventually assassinated by other officers in 275.

REGAINING CONTROL

An end to the chaos of the invasions and civil wars of the 3rd century came with the rise to power in 284 of Diocletian. Another tough Illyrian soldier-emperor, he would rule for over two decades, an unprecedentedly lengthy reign in this era of upheaval. Along with his great friend and partner, Maximian, whom he made co-Augustus alongside him, Diocletian restored security to Rome's far-flung frontiers and steadily brought to heel the remaining breakaway provinces of the empire.

To forestall further rebellions by military men with soldiers at their disposal, Diocletian instituted the Tetrarchy, or rule by four. Each of the two senior Augusti, in this case Diocletian and Maximian, would rule one half of the empire, east or west. Each man would also select a junior partner, or Caesar, to be his designated successor. With the Tetrarchy

Images Alamy (Nicaea), wiki/Diliff CC BY-SA 2.5 (Colosseum)

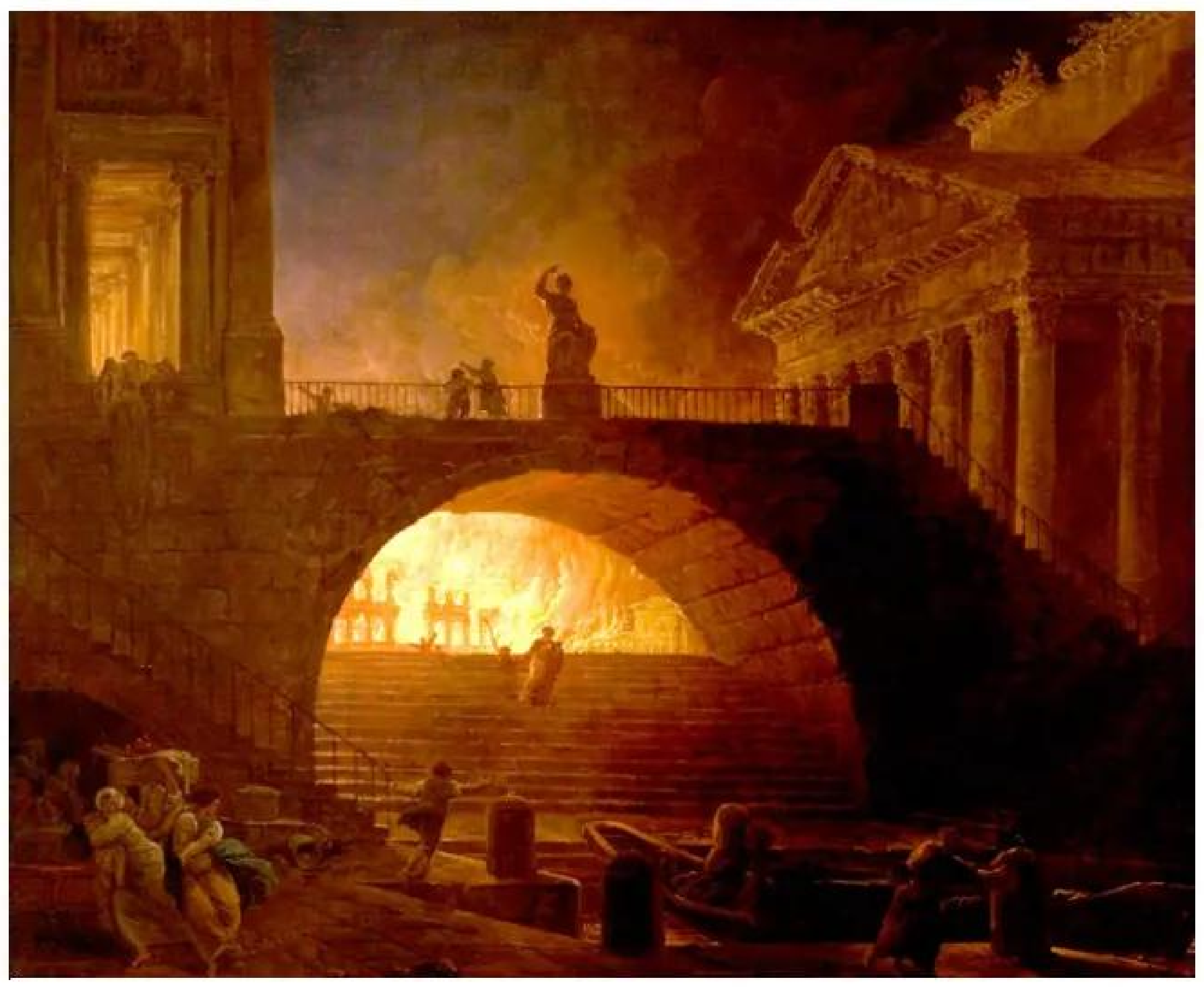
there would be four men sharing the imperial authority, each able to be on the spot to deal with a crisis. Designating successors in the form of the two Caesars was meant to dissuade other generals from getting the idea that they could revolt and be named Augustus.

To make his position and those of his co-rulers more secure, Diocletian and his co-rulers adopted splendid dress and elaborate court ritual similar to Eastern monarchs. This new, grander style was a significant step away from traditional Roman practice, and the autocratic style of imperial government has led historians to aptly refer to this period of the later Roman Empire as the 'Dominate'.

Diocletian and Maximian, having set Rome on what they thought was a firm footing, both abdicated in 305. The Tetrarchy soon foundered without their stabilising presence. Constantine, the son of the former Augustus Constantius Chlorus, who had died in 306, was declared Augustus himself by his troops, and later came into conflict with Maxentius, the son of Maximian, over the control of the Western Empire. In 312, Constantine defeated Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.

Constantine attributed his startling victory to the Christian god. In 313 he promulgated the Edict of Milan, which legalised Christianity, only recently a severely persecuted religion. Constantine showed the Christians enormous favour, building many grand churches. He wanted to unite the empire religiously, and his chosen religion for this was Christianity.

By 324 he had defeated Licinius and was the sole ruler of the whole of the Roman Empire.



Nero is said to have started the Great Fire that burned Rome, which he then blamed on the Christians

That same year he founded a new imperial capital on the site of Byzantium, an ancient city on the Bosporus. It would come to bear his name: Constantinople.

In 325 he convened a great church council in the city of Nicaea, over which he presided with the aim of coming to an agreement on matters of theology. The Council of Nicaea delivered a standard formula on the nature of Jesus Christ, a matter that had split the Christian Church for many years.

After his death in 337, Constantine's successors fell into conflict, just as had happened after Diocletian and Maximian's abdications. Most notable of these was Julian, who was called the Apostate for his attempt to suppress Christianity and restore the ancient pagan religion of the empire. He died in

UNPEACEFUL PAX ROMANA

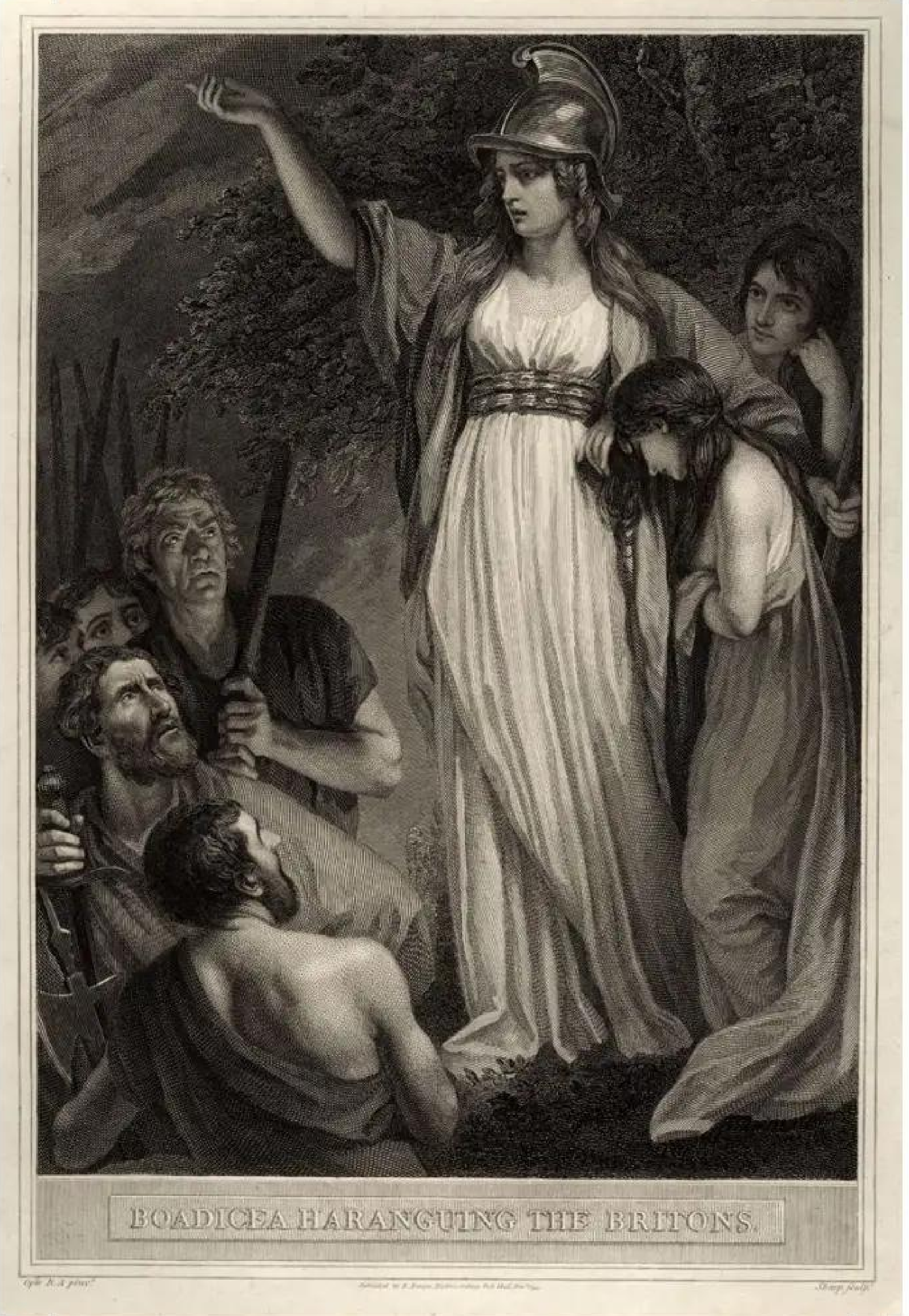
The Roman Peace was less pacific than is commonly thought

The famed *Pax Romana*, or 'Roman Peace', was not without its interruptions. There was a gigantic revolt in Pannonia in 6 CE that raged on for three bloody years and required the dispatch of many legions to stamp out.

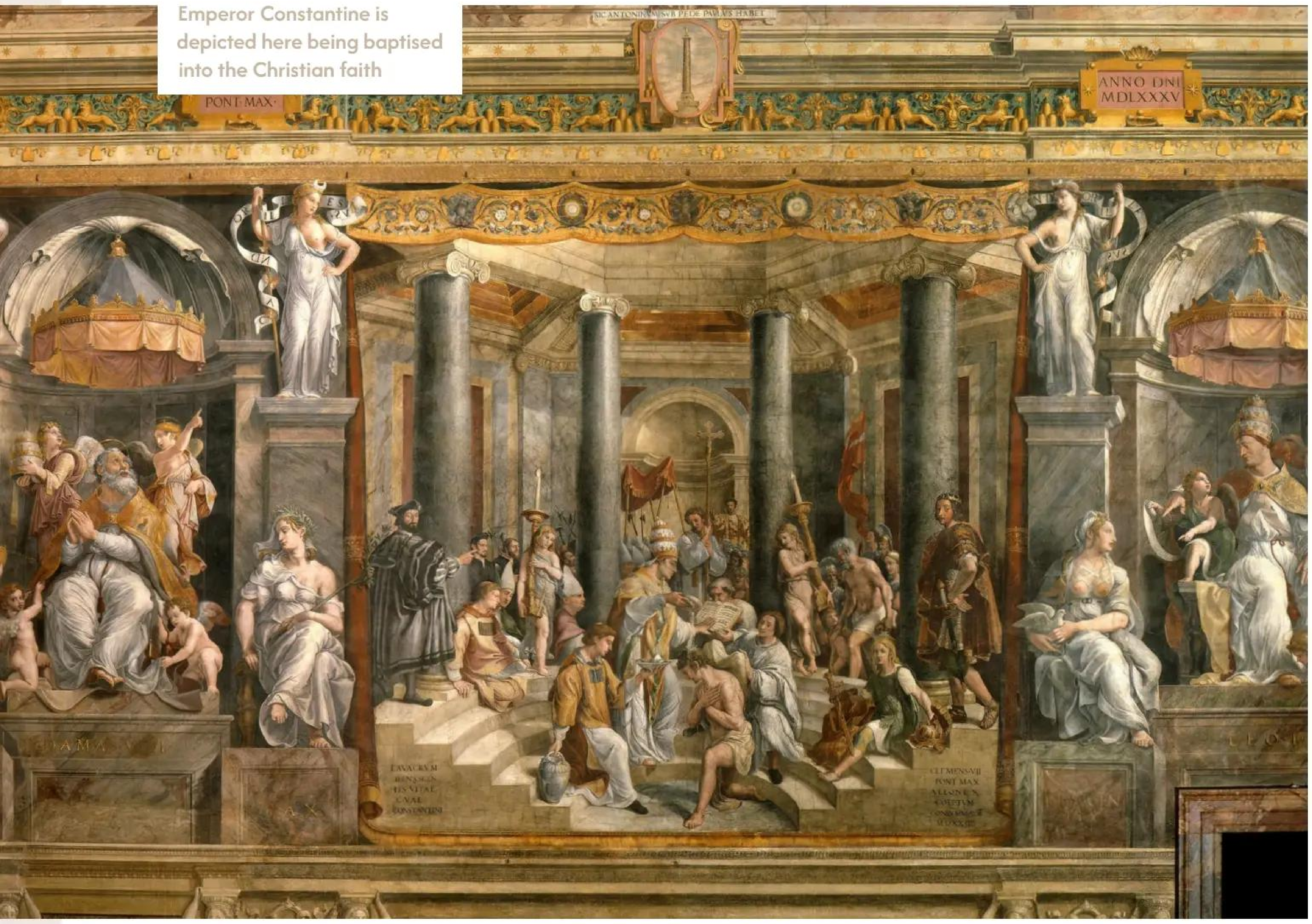
In 9 CE, three entire legions were ambushed and wiped out by German tribesmen in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in northern Germany. Much fighting on the eastern side of the Rhine was required to punish the Germans in the following years. The ferocious Batavians revolted in 69 CE and their rebellion was put down with great difficulty. Likewise, in 60 CE the Britons revolted against Roman rule under the leadership of their warrior-queen, Boudica.

In Judaea the Jews also revolted twice against Roman authority, in 66 CE and 132 respectively. Jerusalem was sacked by the legions in 70 CE. After the second rebellion of 132-35 failed, the Jews were dispersed across the empire.

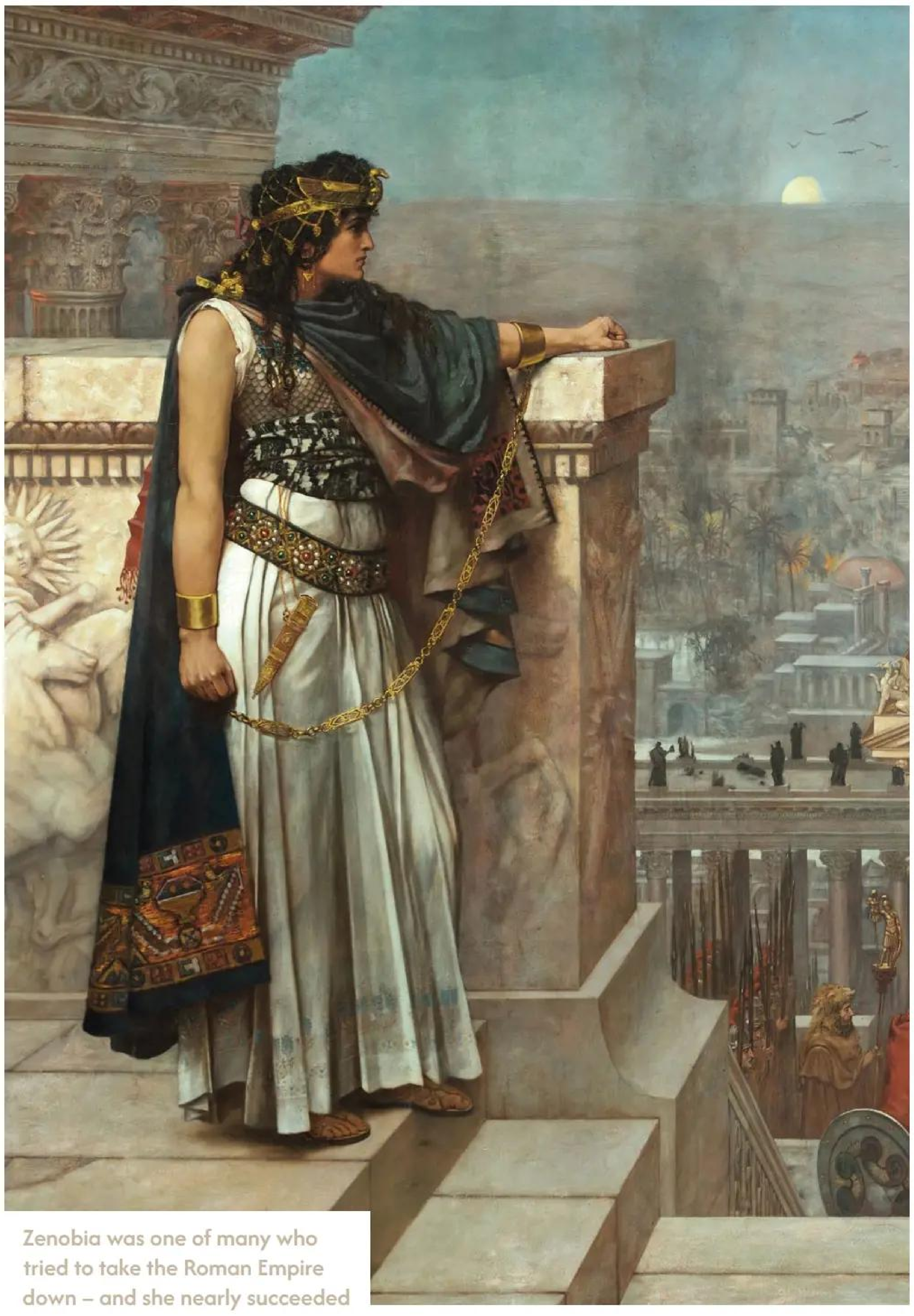
In the East there were wars with the empire of Parthia, centred on Iran. The main point of contention was the kingdom of Armenia, which adjoined both empires. Parthia itself was invaded by Emperor Trajan in 115 and its capital Ctesiphon on the Tigris River in distant Mesopotamia was sacked.


BOADICEA HARANGUING THE BRITONS.

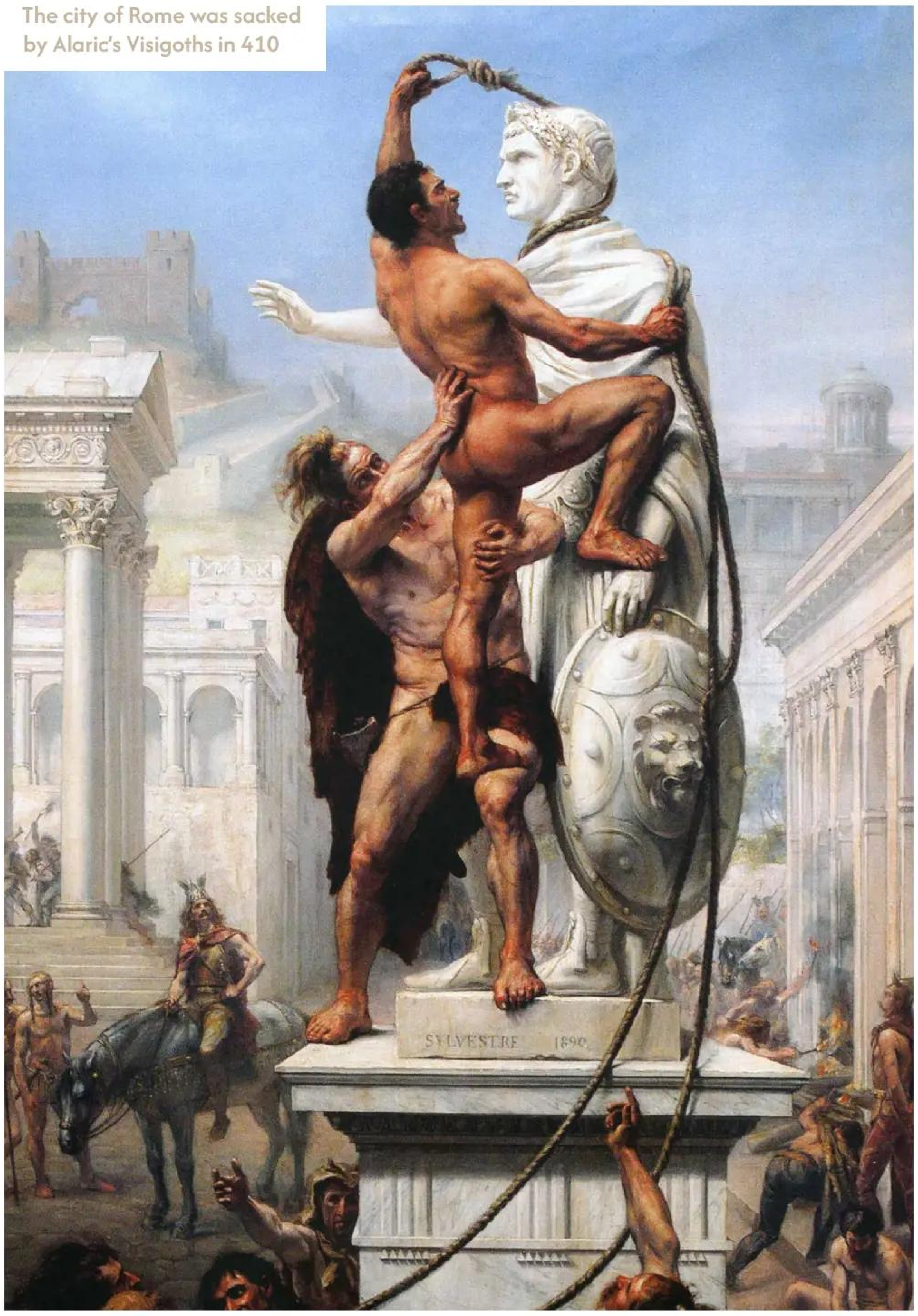
Boudica, queen of the Iceni, led a massive uprising against the Romans in 60 CE



Emperor Constantine is depicted here being baptised into the Christian faith



Zenobia was one of many who tried to take the Roman Empire down – and she nearly succeeded



The city of Rome was sacked by Alaric's Visigoths in 410

> THEODOSIUS, WHO MADE CHRISTIANITY THE MAIN RELIGION, WOULD BE THE LAST EMPEROR TO RULE OVER A UNITED EMPIRE

battle fighting the Sassanid Persians, and his revisionist religious project came to nothing.

ENDLESS BATTLES

Rome's borders were still under unending pressure from the barbarians, particularly the Germanic peoples living east of the Rhine River and north and east of the Danube River. In 378 a Roman army was utterly annihilated (losses are estimated at between 10,000 and 20,000 men) by the Goths of Germany and the Alans of Iran at the Battle of Adrianople in the Balkans. Emperor Theodosius managed to restore order to the empire, but it was precarious. Roman losses in the fighting had been so great that he had to rely ever more heavily on barbarian troops.

Worryingly, these barbarian soldiers, mainly Germans, were now being brought into their army under their own native commanders and not subjected to Roman discipline or training. They had a tendency to rebel when things were not to their liking. Yet the Romans were unable to find enough native troops to fill their armies and could not do without the Germans. Theodosius, who made Christianity the official religion of Rome, would be the last emperor to rule over a united empire, east and west. In the early 5th century, Franks and Visigoths crossed the Rhine River into Gaul; Visigoths and Vandals migrated to Spain, and the Vandals then invaded North Africa, leaving a bloody trail of death and destruction in their wake as they marauded across the continent.

One Gothic general, Alaric, a former officer of Theodosius, sacked Rome in 410. The Western Empire was enfeebled by barbarian invasions, the loss of territory and with it, tax revenue, and a general unwillingness on the part of the Eastern Empire to help it. The city of Rome was sacked again in 455 by Vandals sailing from North Africa.

The outlook of the Western Empire would darken further as it was nearly overrun by Attila and his Huns. Only a victory at the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains in 451, largely attributable to barbarian soldiers, saved the Western Empire. After this, a succession of shadowy emperors dominated by their Germanic warlords would come and go.

The last emperor in the West, Romulus Augustulus, would be deposed by his warlord, Odoacer, in 476. The Roman Empire in the West was gone forever. The Eastern Empire, controlling wealthier territories and with its capital of Constantinople largely secure behind lofty walls, would survive for 1,000 years until it was conquered by the Ottomans in 1453.

ROMAN EMPIRE TIMELINE

FROM MONARCHY TO EMPIRE AND BACK AGAIN, THIS IS YOUR GUIDE TO THE POTTED HISTORY OF THE ROMAN CIVILISATION

WORDS MARK DOLAN

THE FOUNDING OF ROME 753 BCE

The foundation of Rome is an event mired in myth and legend. According to tradition, it was founded on 21 April 753 BCE by Romulus, a legendary demigod. Romulus's supposed reign aligned with the beginning of the Roman Kingdom, which would see six further real kings rule until 509 BCE.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPUBLIC 509 BCE

After the overthrow of the monarchy, Rome dramatically changed course. The Senate, made up of wealthy patricians, was supplemented with a series of assemblies, including the Concilium Plebis (Plebeian Council), which democratically elected two magistrates, called Consuls, to govern on the people's behalf for a single year. Brutus and Collatinus, the architects of the revolution, were elected the city's first consuls.

AUGUSTUS AND THE CREATION OF THE EMPIRE 44-27 BCE

Caesar's lust for power got him killed in 44 BCE. His great-nephew, Octavian, quickly moved to create the Second Triumvirate, allying himself with Mark Antony, and Lepidus. Together, they systematically killed all the conspirators and assassins responsible for Caesar's demise before fending off Pompey's son's bid for power. Before long, the alliance fell apart, and Octavian found himself fighting Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. Defeating their combined forces, he soon became sole ruler.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS

According to Livy, the first iteration of the Circus Maximus was built by the fifth King of Rome, Tarquinius Priscus. Later expanded by Julius Caesar and Constantine, it's said to have seated 250,000 people, more than any stadium before or since.

c. 599-578 BCE

THE PUNIC WARS

When the first war over control of Sicily broke out, Rome was a fledgling state, while Carthage was a major Mediterranean power. Over the next century, via three hard-won victories, Rome emerged as the dominant force in the region.

264-146 BCE

PAX ROMANA

Despite its bloody start, Augustus's reign was one of great prosperity and relative stability, beginning the near-200-year *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace). During this period, the Roman Empire saw great developments in engineering, architecture, conquest, art and culture.

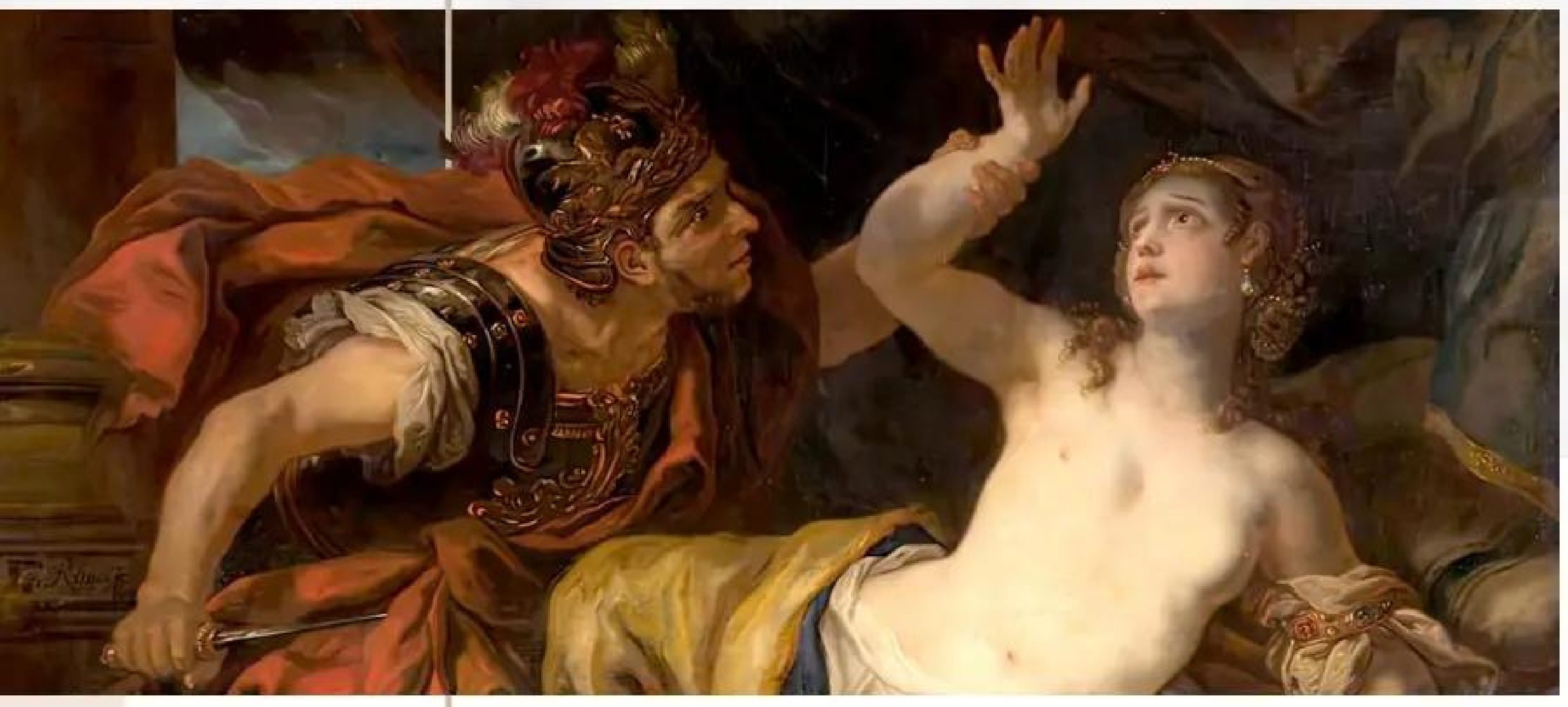
27 BCE - 180 CE

753 BCE 509 BCE 509 BCE 60 BCE 44 BCE

THIRD SERVILE WAR

Spartacus famously led the most successful of three slave revolts: the Third Servile War. With his army of freed slaves growing to 120,000, he represented a major threat to Rome, but was eventually defeated by Marcus Licinius Crassus.

73-71 BCE



THE RAPE OF LUCRETIA AND THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY 509 BCE

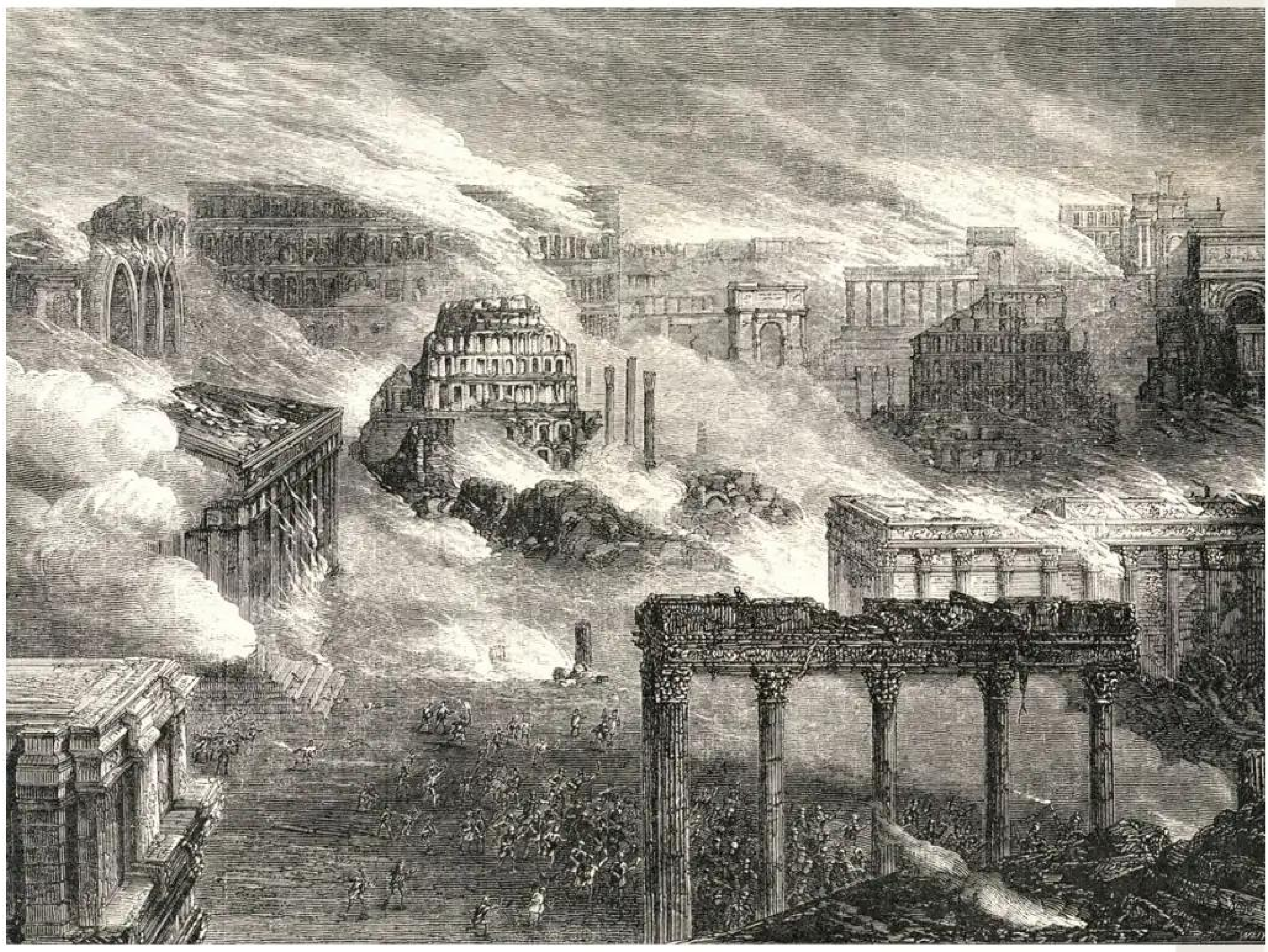
In the 6th century BCE, one event is said to have brought about the fall of the monarchy. The seventh king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus, was tyrannical and unpopular with the Roman people, many of whom were put to forced labour under his regime. When his son, Sextus, raped Lucretia, the wife of the nobleman Lucius Iunius Brutus, she subsequently committed suicide out of the shame brought on her and her family. Brutus swore an oath of revenge and teamed up with Collatinus to lead the senators in a revolt against the King. They successfully removed Tarquinius from power, and with him fell the monarchy itself.

THE FIRST TRIUMVIRATE AND CAESAR'S RISE TO POWER 60-45 BCE

In the wake of the Third Servile War, Rome was politically unsteady. Three ambitious, powerful men – Julius Caesar, Pompey and Crassus – saw an opportunity. They formed the First Triumvirate, an uneasy alliance, and together ruled politics for the following years. After Crassus's death and a civil war between the others, Caesar triumphed and took power.

BOUDICA AND THE ICENI REVOLT 60-61 CE

The conquest of Britain was far from straightforward. With a combination of possible motivators, including Roman greed, ongoing conflict or the violence against her family, Boudica, leader of the Iceni tribe, staged a revolt against the Roman colonisers, razing Camulodunum (Colchester), Londinium (London) and Verulamium (St Albans) before being eventually beaten, despite a massive numerical advantage, by Suetonius Paulinus, the governor of the Province of Britannia.



ROME FALLS 476

By the early 5th century, the eastern Roman Empire was prosperous, while the west, and Rome itself, were shadows of their former selves. The two empires were now completely distinct entities, and the power lay squarely in Constantinople. In 410, Rome was sacked by the Visigoths and no aid was forthcoming from the east. Most historians now cite 476 as the date that Rome fell, when the toothless emperor Romulus Augustulus was toppled by Odoacer, a Germanic soldier who was later styled the first King of Italy.

CALIGULA

Even within the calm period of *Pax Romana*, there were a few hiccups. One was the short reign of Caligula, who showed early promise but became paranoid, despotic and sadistic after a near-death experience.

37-41 CE

THE INVASION OF BRITAIN

When Claudius succeeded Caligula, he was seen as weak. To prove himself, he sent an invading force to conquer Britain and capture its natural resources. The success saw Claudius lauded in Rome, though fighting continued in Britain.

43 CE

60 CE

THE GREAT FIRE OF ROME

On 19 July, a fire started near the Circus Maximus that would engulf much of the city. Three of Rome's 14 districts were destroyed. Nero, contrary to the myth, did not play the lyre but led the relief efforts.

64 CE

BUILDING THE COLOSSEUM

The Colosseum, or Flavian Amphitheatre, was a project undertaken by Vespasian to restore Rome to glory after the civil war in 68-69 CE. It was opened to the public in 80 CE by Titus and finally completed during Domitian's reign.

70-80 CE

THE ERUPTION OF VESUVIUS

Over two days, Mount Vesuvius erupted – first with ash and later with high-speed pyroclastic flow – decimating two prosperous Roman towns: Pompeii and Herculaneum. The disaster caused huge destruction and loss of life, including that of Pliny the Elder.

79 CE

235

DIOCLETIAN AND THE TETRARCHY

After coming to power, Diocletian recognised that the Empire was simply too big to be governed by one man. He therefore created the Tetrarchy, appointing three co-emperors to rule over its constituent parts, with himself at the top of the hierarchy.

293

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN EMPEROR

Constantine the Great was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity and promote it – along with western European and Byzantine culture. However, he was tolerant to the old Pagan practices, too.

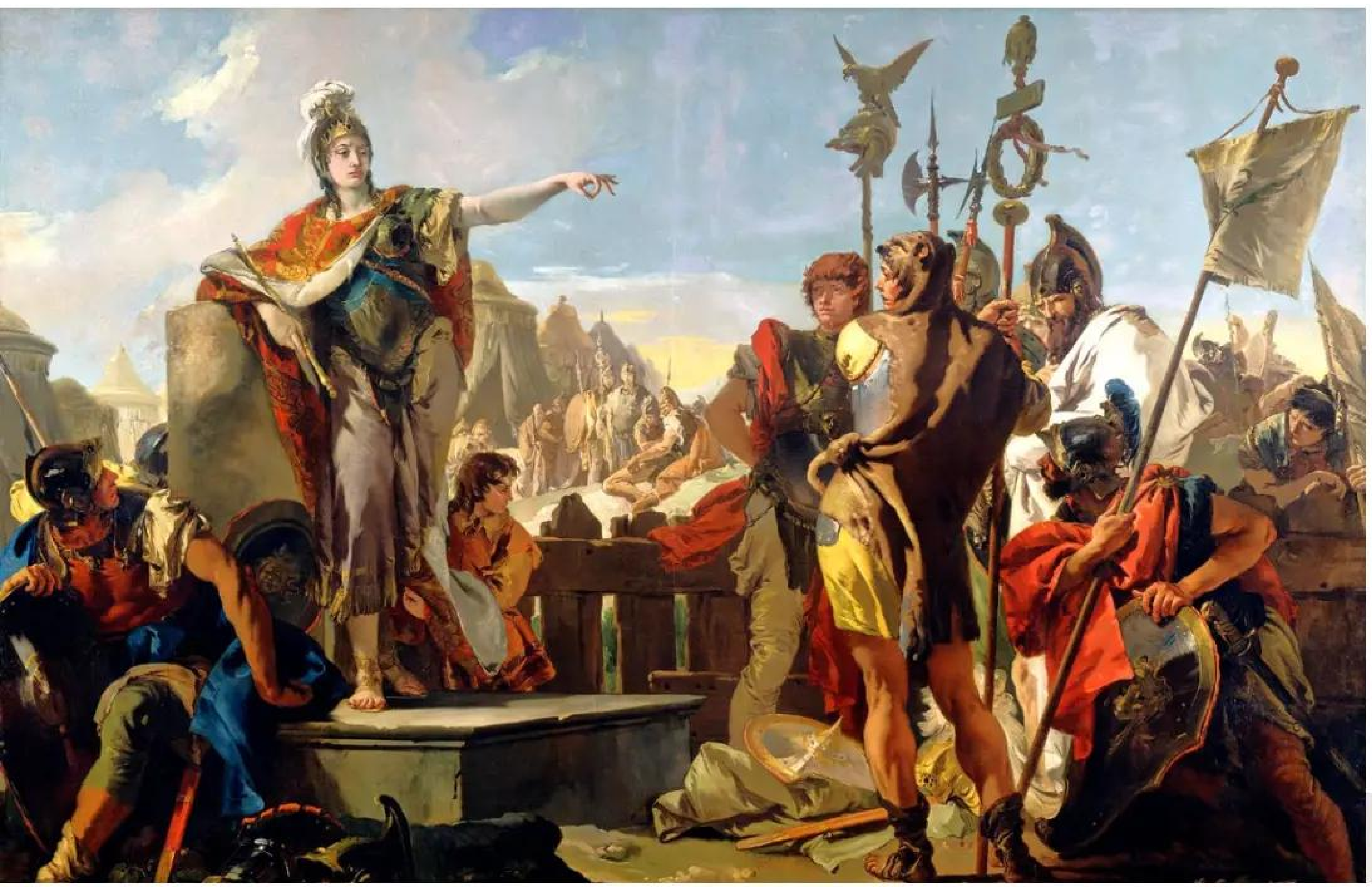
306-337

THE EMPIRE SPLITS IN TWO

Years of prioritising the eastern half of the Roman Empire, oppression of Pagans and invasion, poor trade and high taxes in the west resulted in the Roman Empire splitting for good upon Theodosius's death.

395

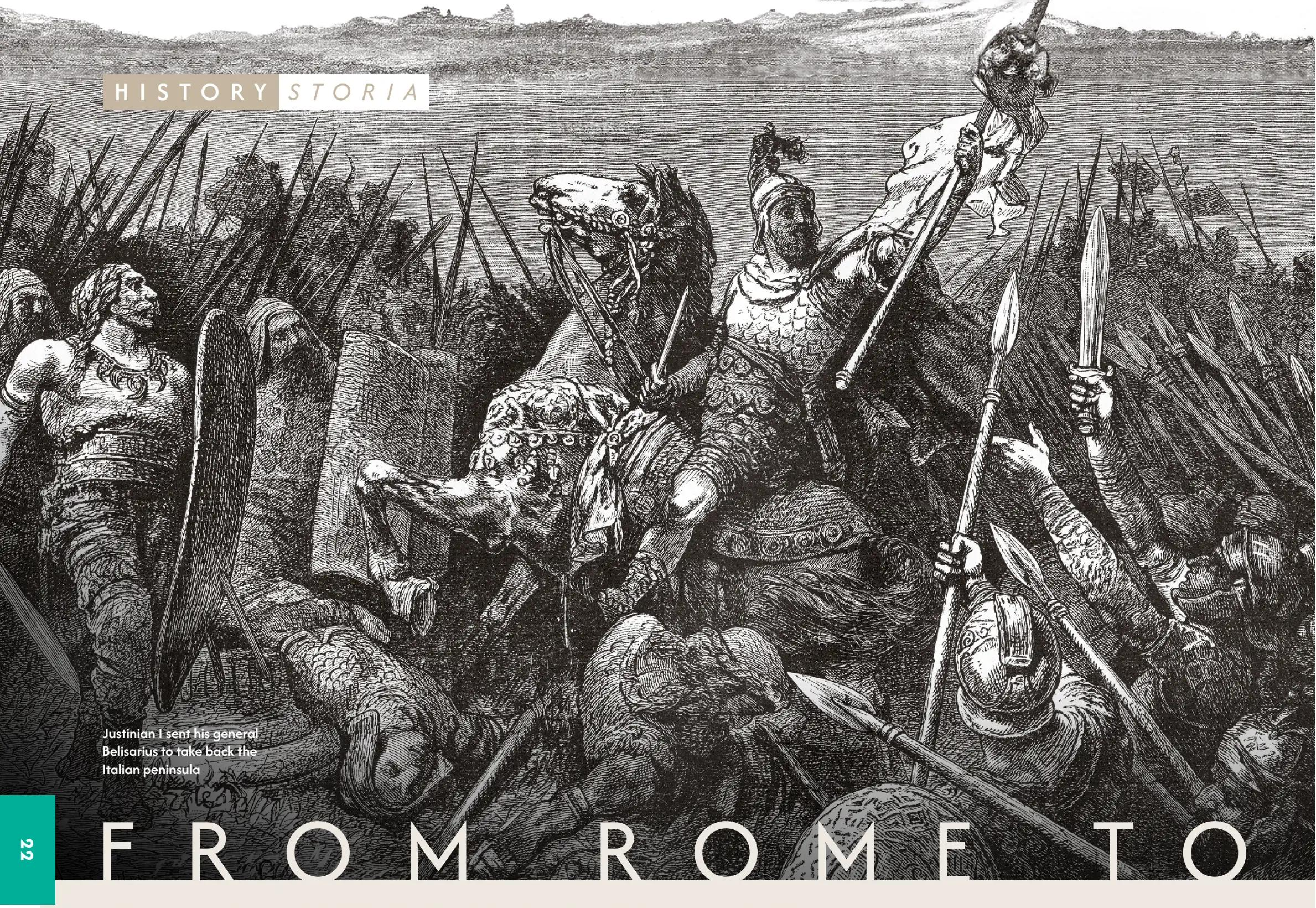
476



THE CRISIS OF THE 3RD CENTURY 235-284

A tumultuous period of just 50 years saw 51 individuals claim the Roman throne while the Empire suffered repeated invasions from tribes living around its borders, breakaway empires – the Gallic Empire to the west and Queen Zenobia's Palmyrene Empire to the east – and the military exercising unprecedented power over the emperors it was in service of. Eventually, a saviour arrived in the shape of Aurelian. An able military leader, he quickly quashed the northern tribes before moving on to the eastern front, where he outmanoeuvred the Palmyrenes and captured Zenobia. Finally, he turned his attention to the Gallic Empire, which he was able to roundly defeat.

Images Getty Images, Alamy



Justinian I sent his general Belisarius to take back the Italian peninsula

FROM ROME TO

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD WAS FULL OF IMPERIAL AMBITION, RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY AND VICIOUS POWER STRUGGLES

WORDS MARK DOLAN

Medieval Italy is a story of conquest, power struggles, religion and empire. For almost a thousand years, there was constant flux, with different areas being won and lost by both local and foreign powers. It was, however, one of the most intense and influential periods of Italian history, having a huge bearing not only on the Renaissance that followed, but the shape and nature of the country today.

THE OSTROGOTHIC KINGDOM

The Ostrogoths were a Germanic tribe living around the Black Sea, on the edge of the floundering Western Roman Empire. In 493, the King of the Ostrogoths, Theodoric, successfully conquered Rome, killing its previous ruler, Odoacer. Odoacer had been causing friction with the Byzantine emperor, Zeno, who subsequently supported Theodoric's invasion. Theodoric's rule was peaceful and prosperous, with Ostrogoths and Romans living together in relative harmony. He encouraged his people to resist the pull of Romanisation and continue their own ways of life, but eventually many Ostrogoths did adopt Roman culture and lifestyles. Although for much of his reign Theodoric encouraged religious freedom, literacy and culture, shortly before his death, he fell out with some of his close advisors, including the philosopher and senator Boethius, whom he had killed.

BYZANTINE ITALY

After Theodoric's death in 526, his daughter Amalasuntha took power as his successor, while her cousin Theodahad rivalled her for control. Neither could fill their predecessor's shoes, and after Amalasuntha's death in 535, the Ostrogothic Kingdom was vulnerable. In stepped Emperor Justinian I. His general, Belisarius, had recently conquered Vandal Africa, and Justinian was keen to turn his attention to taking back control of the Italian peninsula for the Byzantine Empire. The Gothic War raged on for almost 20 years, with the Ostrogothic leader, Totila, mounting a vicious resistance. Eventually, Justinian pumped more funds into the war and appointed Narses to lead the army, who in 552 ousted the Goths for good.

THE LOMBARD INVASION

The Lombards, or Longobards, were a Germanic tribe who saw an opportunity in the exhaustion wrought by the Gothic War and the plague that swept the peninsula in the mid-6th century. They invaded in 568, led by their chieftain Alboin, and took much of northern Italy before Alboin was killed, and the loosely organised Lombards fractured into autonomous regional duchies. The largest of these duchies was the Lombard Kingdom, which lasted until 774 and had its capital at Pavia. In the south, two other major but independent Lombard duchies grew, in Spoleto and Benevento. The Lombards seem to have peacefully adopted Catholicism in the mid-7th century, with the foundations laid by one of its great early kings, Agilulf, who cultivated a close relationship with Pope Gregory I during his reign.

RENAISSANCE

CHARLEMAGNE & THE FRANKISH INVASION

Towards the end of the reign of the Lombards in Italy, King Aistulf invaded Ravenna, limiting Byzantine control to Sicily and the south. This left Rome and the Pope vulnerable to Lombard invasion, resulting in their appeal to the Franks for aid in exchange for papal recognition and divine sanction for the Frankish leader Pepin's seizure of control from his Merovingian predecessor. Pope Stephen II anointed Pepin as king in 754, and he subsequently led campaigns to reclaim papal territories from the Lombards. When Charlemagne took power after Pepin's death, he continued to campaign against the Lombards, including the duchy of Benevento. In 774, he once again came to the aid of the Pope, capturing Pavia and dethroning King Desiderius. He was subsequently crowned King of the Lombards, beginning the Carolingian Period.

> “
> CHARLEMAGNE SPENT LITTLE TIME IN ITALY, NO MORE THAN 14 MONTHS TOTAL

THE CAROLINGIAN PERIOD

By 800, Charlemagne had successfully ended the dominance of the Lombards, and Pope Leo III crowned him a new Roman emperor (the first of what would later be known as the Holy Roman Empire). Charlemagne spent little time in Italy, no more than 14 months total, but for most of the 9th century, Carolingian Italy was peaceful, despite the unrest that ravaged much of the rest of the Frankish Empire. Towards the end of the century, a military commander named Berengar was elected to be king of Italy (Louis II, his predecessor, had died with no male heir, leaving a power vacuum). Berengar I was unpopular and unfit for office, and during his reign, the government weakened. None of his successors were able to stabilise power and the king of Germany, Otto I, was able to seize power almost without bloodshed in 962.

THE OTTONIAN SYSTEM

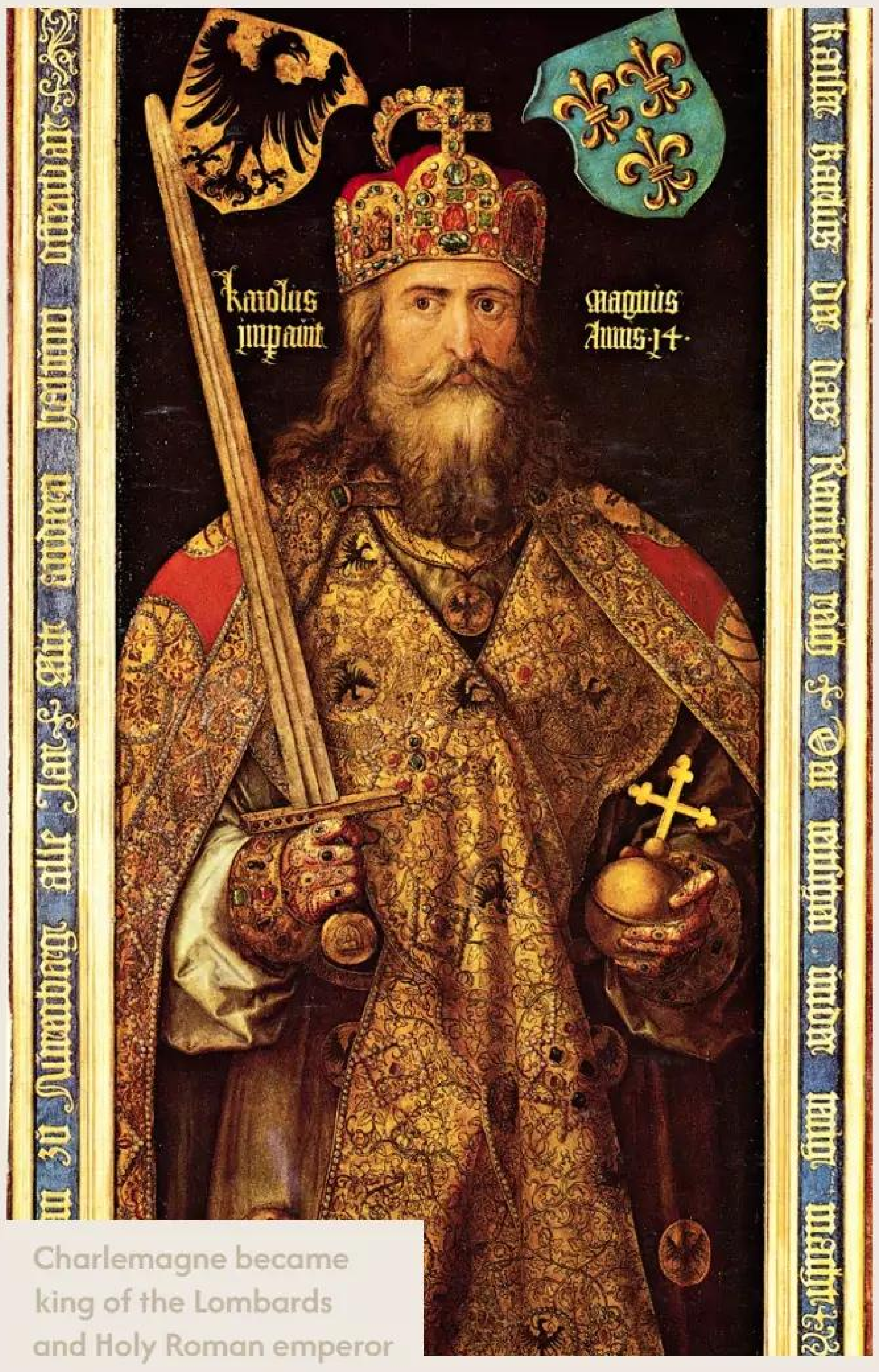
Otto I had established himself as the pre-eminent ruler in Europe, and his coronation as Holy Roman emperor by Pope John XII was a recognition of this fact, giving his power legitimacy from the church and returning the title from little more than symbolic to a genuine position of political power. When the pope turned on Otto, however, the Emperor gathered German bishops – his supporters – and with their backing replaced the Pope with Leo VIII. This power foundation, leaning heavily on bishops for support, would underpin the next 200 years of political tumult, as emperors, popes and antipopes rose and fell in quick succession.

CITY-STATES, THE HOHENSTAUFEN DYNASTY & FREDERICK BARBAROSSA

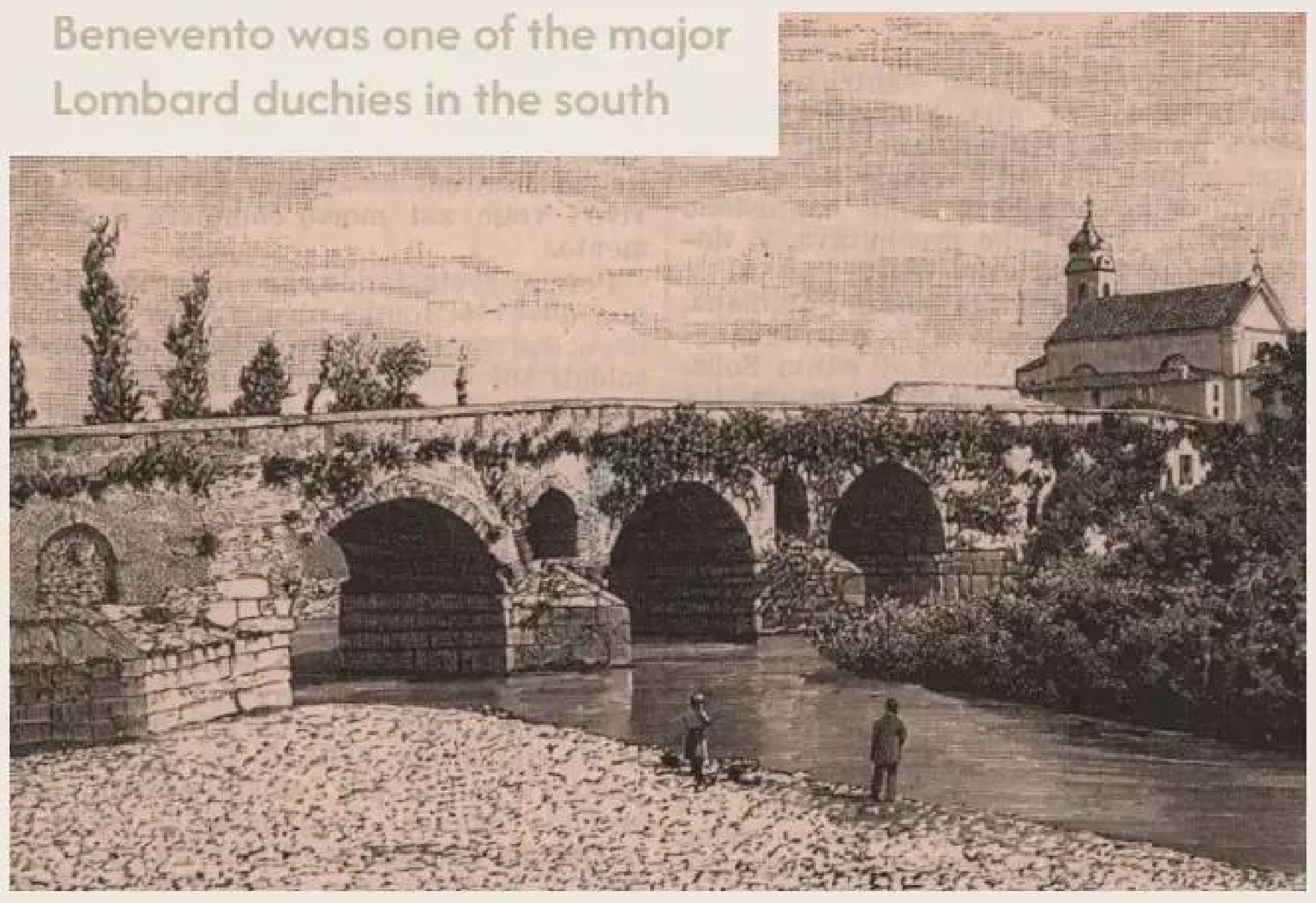
In the early 12th century, with imperial and clerical power waning, communes began to take hold throughout Italy. Many cities, including the likes of Pisa and Genoa, formed their own local governments, leading to the emergence of city-states controlling the hinterlands around each urban centre. The fractured political situation saw the German Hohenstaufen dynasty set eyes on re-establishing imperial rule with the aid of the papacy. It was Frederick I Barbarossa (so called due to his distinctive red beard) who took on this challenge most fervently. He fought continuously with Rome and Italy's other independent communes, particularly Milan, but could not stop their power and influence growing during his reign.

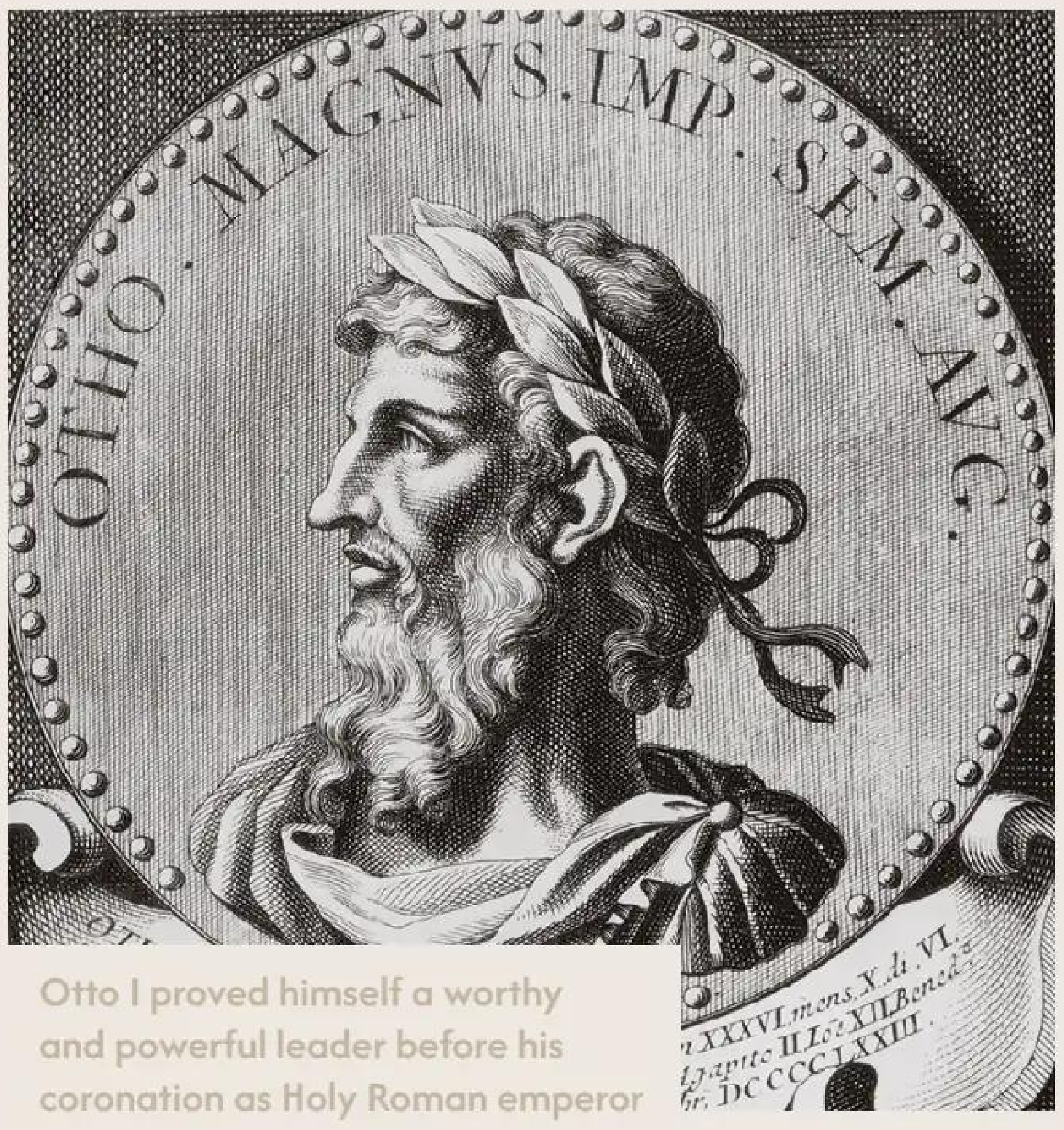
THE END OF IMPERIAL RULE AND THE MIDDLE AGES

By the late 13th century, with the death of Frederick II, the direct descendant of Frederick Barbarossa, and his sons, imperial rule in Italy had sputtered to an end. The papacy grew in power and influence – being partially responsible in bringing the Hohenstaufen dynasty down – while communes had also increased in strength. The country was a loose mix of internal and external influence, with powerful, wealthy cities such as Florence and Milan, the papacy in Rome, and the French all vying for power.



Charlemagne became king of the Lombards and Holy Roman emperor


Benevento was one of the major Lombard duchies in the south


OTHO . MAGNVS . IMP . SEM . AVG .
Otto I proved himself a worthy and powerful leader before his coronation as Holy Roman emperor

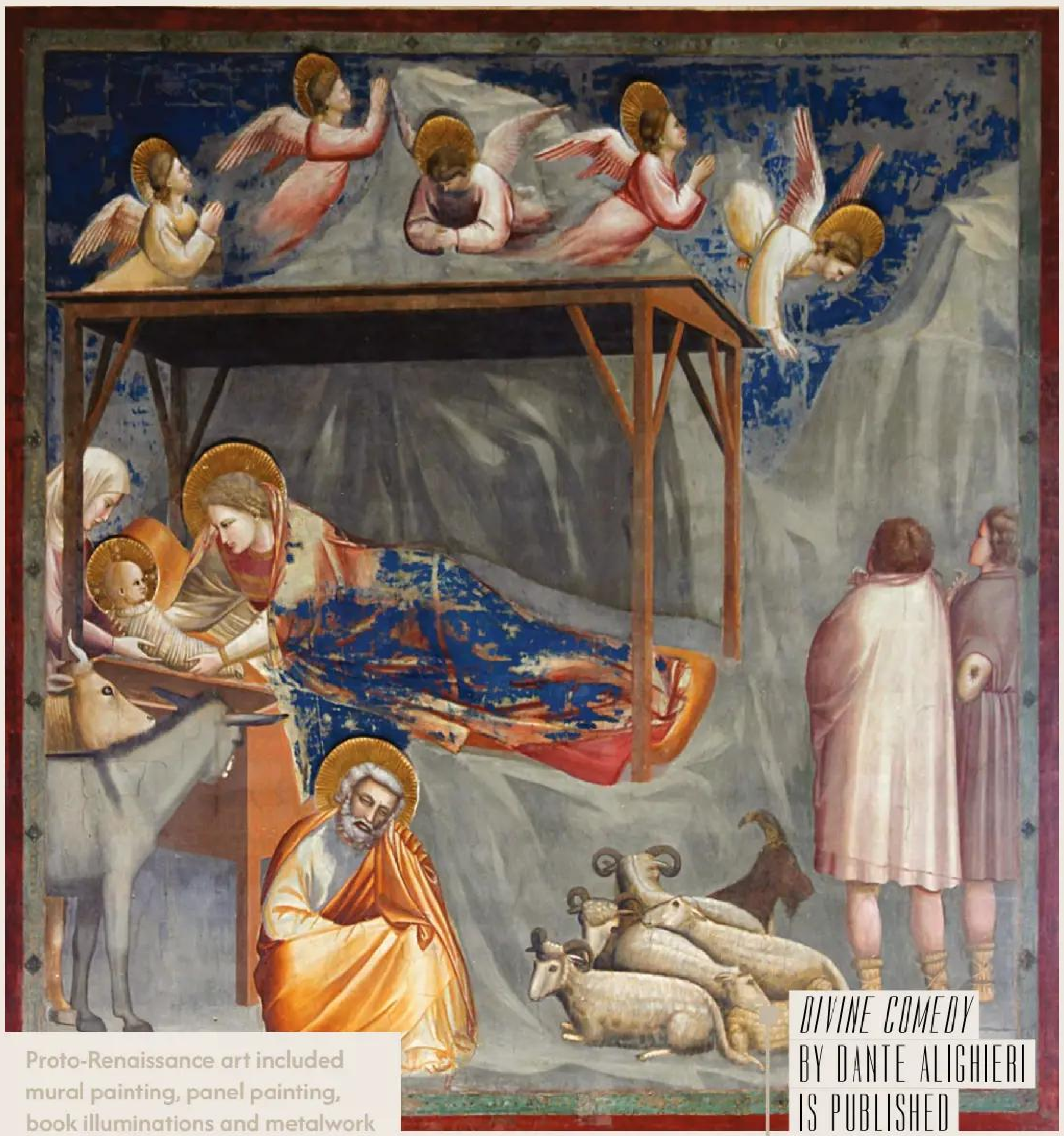
Images Getty Images

GOLDEN AGE
THE RENAI

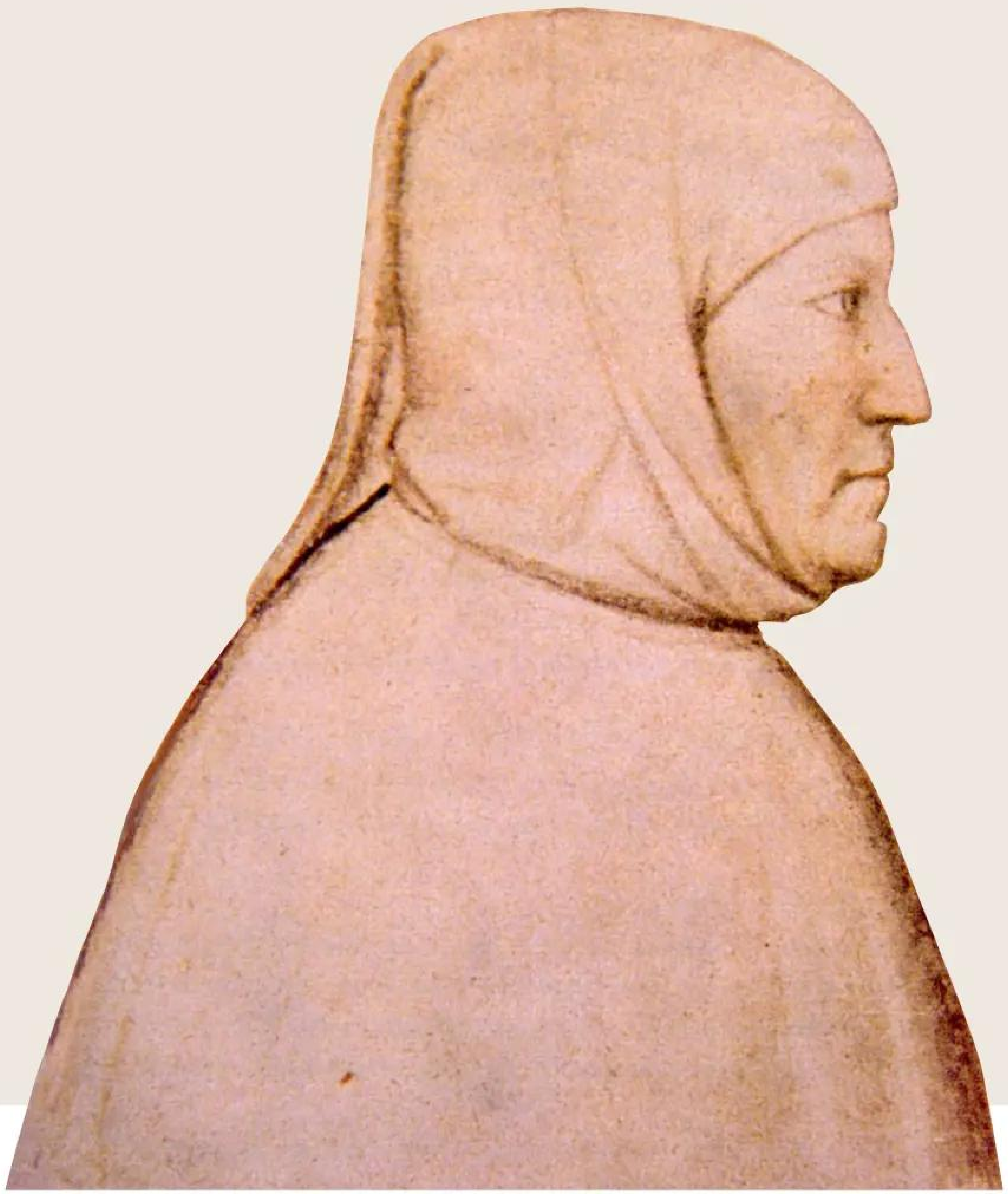
AS THE MIDDLE AGES CAME TO A CLOSE, ITALY BECAME THE BIRTHPLACE OF A CULTURAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT THAT RESHAPED THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT

WORDS CALLUM McKELVIE & JACK GRIFFITHS

Da Vinci's the *Mona Lisa*. Michelangelo's *David*. Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. All are among the most famous works of art to ever have existed. Yet all were crafted during the same time period: the Renaissance. From the 14th to the 16th centuries, Italian civilisation flourished with philosophical, literary and architectural achievements – alongside the artistic ones. Powerful families, like the Medicis, acted as patrons to painters, poets, sculptors and scientists. But the Renaissance was not the only event that occurred between the end of the Medieval era and the dawning of the modern world. During the same period, Italy experienced other monumental events, such as the dreaded Black Death, all of which we will highlight here.



Proto-Renaissance art included mural painting, panel painting, book illuminations and metalwork



1300

1304

c.1321

DIVINE COMEDY BY DANTE ALIGHIERI IS PUBLISHED

PROTO-RENAISSANCE 1300-1400

The Proto-Renaissance, which bridged the gap between the Medieval period and what is commonly considered to be the Renaissance era, began in the northern Italian city-states. Spanning roughly the entirety of the 14th century, it was dominated by a new wave of artists who pushed back against the styles popular in the preceding period, instead utilising an early form of naturalism. A key figure in this movement was the painter and architect Giotto di Bondone (c.1267-1337) who became known as 'the father of Renaissance art'. The Proto-Renaissance, like every other part of life, was impacted with the arrival of the Black Death into Italy in 1347.

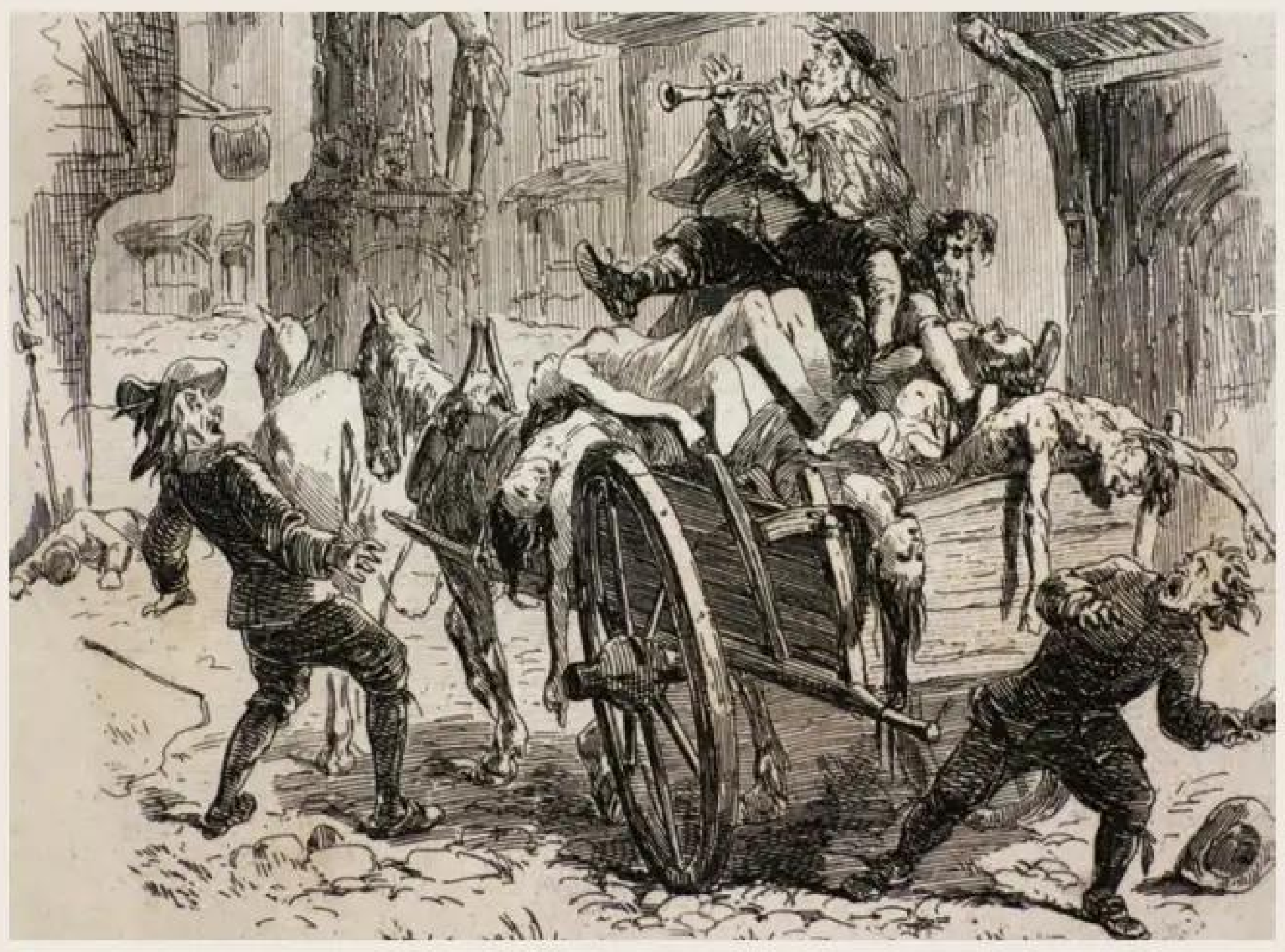
GROWTH OF HUMANISM 1304

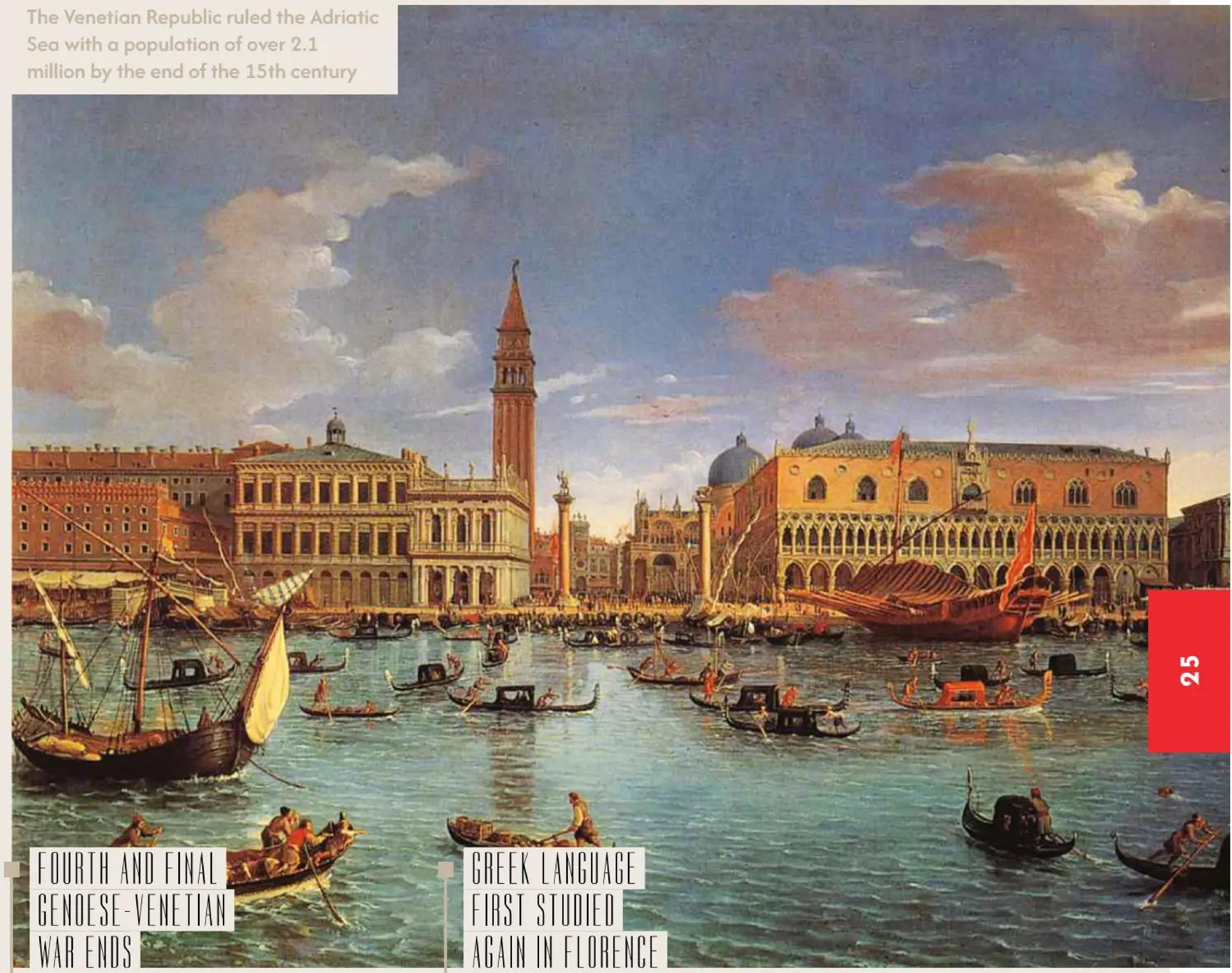
At the dawn of the 14th century, the philosophical belief of humanism became popular, alongside a renewed interest in ancient Roman and Greek culture. Humanism emphasised the individual and human capacity to learn. The father of humanism was Francesco Petrarca or 'Petrarch' (1304-74) who studied the works of Cicero and Virgil, an ancient Roman philosopher and poet respectively. Petrarca propagated the belief that the world would once again return to the splendour of classical antiquity. Petarca's philosophical ideas quickly spread throughout the European continent and would also continue to influence other intellectuals across the subsequent centuries.

SSANCE

THE BLACK DEATH 1347

Italy was not spared the horrors of the Black Death. Even after its peak in Europe in the late 1340s, the disease remained stubbornly prevalent throughout the Italian states. Carried by rats that had travelled on galleys sailing from the east, both the bubonic and pneumonic plague devastated Italy. Messina, Sicily, was the first to feel its effects in 1347, but the pandemic gradually worked its way north, reaching Genoa, Venice and Pisa. Even as the disease died down in other parts of Europe, Italy suffered various recurrences, with outbreaks continuing to recur right up until the 18th century, when it finally dissipated for good.





The Venetian Republic ruled the Adriatic Sea with a population of over 2.1 million by the end of the 15th century

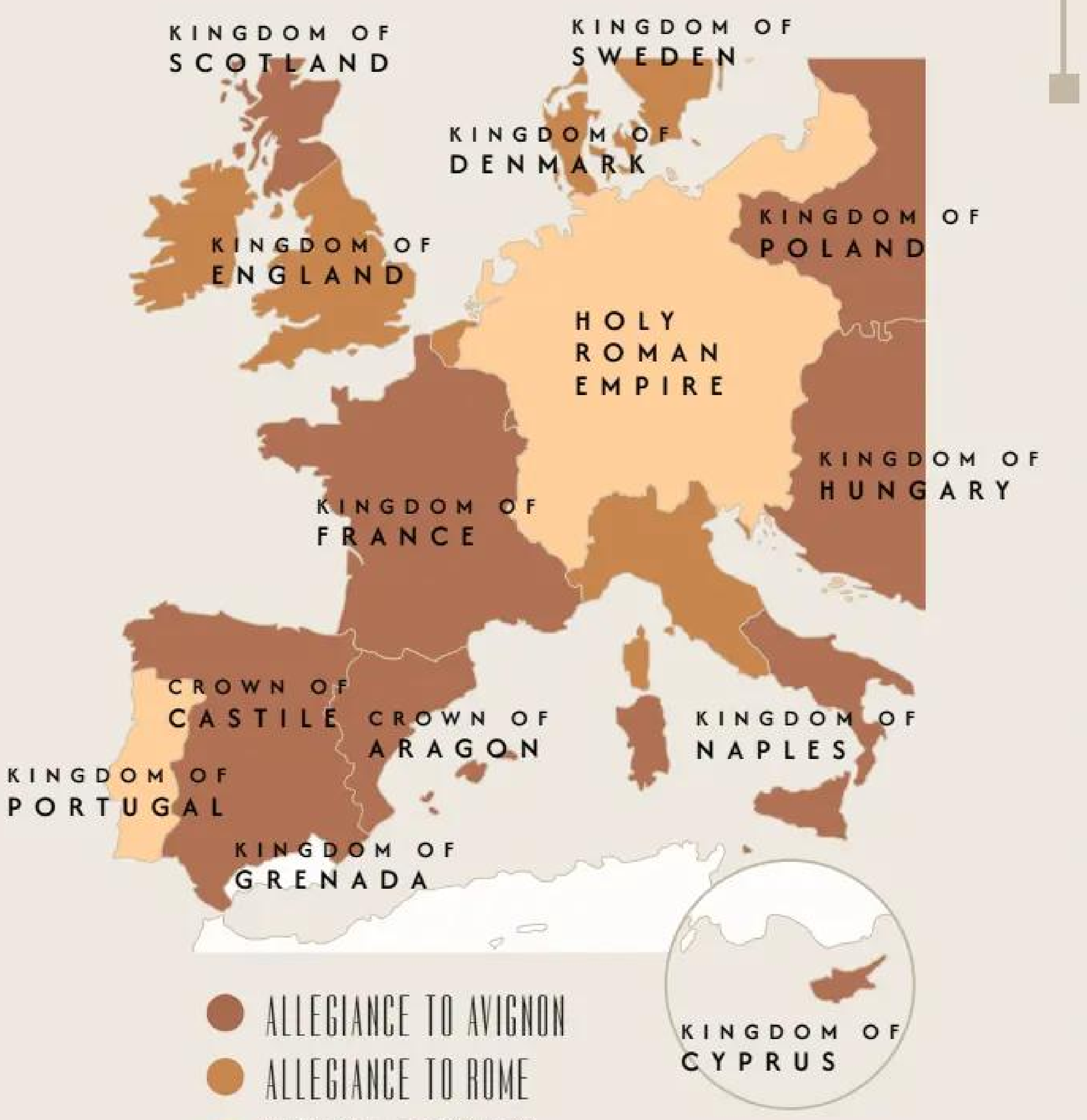
FOURTH AND FINAL GENOESE-VENETIAN WAR ENDS

GREEK LANGUAGE FIRST STUDIED AGAIN IN FLORENCE

1347 1378 1381 1396 1409

THE WESTERN SCHISM 1378-1417

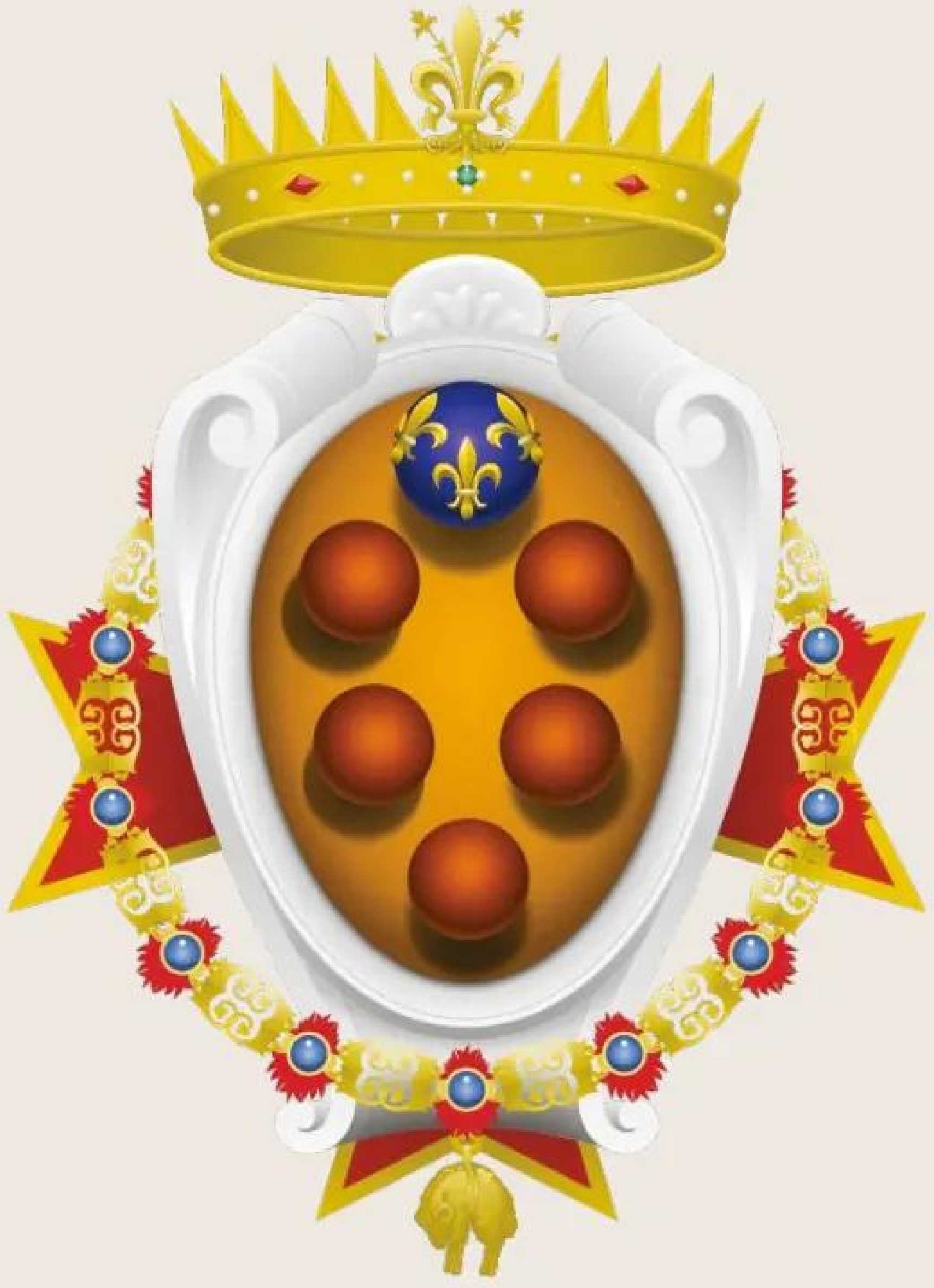
After the death of Pope Gregory XI in 1378, the Catholic Church experienced a significant split. Initially, Pope Urban VI was named as Gregory's successor, but within a few months, a rival group of Cardinals named Clement VII as the true pope. Urban refused to resign and it was decided that he would rule the Church from Rome while Clement led another faction from Avignon, France. In 1409, in a bid to end the rivalry, a third pope, Alexander V, was elected. However, in 1414, the Council of Constance forced John (who replaced Alexander) and the Roman Pope, Gregory XII, to resign, dismissing the rule of the Avignon pope, now Benedict XIII. This paved the way for a once-again unified Catholic Church.


KINGDOM OF SCOTLAND
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
KINGDOM OF DENMARK
KINGDOM OF ENGLAND
KINGDOM OF POLAND
HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE
KINGDOM OF HUNGARY
KINGDOM OF FRANCE
CROWN OF CASTILE
CROWN OF ARAGON
KINGDOM OF NAPLES
KINGDOM OF PORTUGAL
KINGDOM OF GRENADA
KINGDOM OF CYPRUS
● ALLEGIANCE TO AVIGNON
● ALLEGIANCE TO ROME
● VARIABLE ALLEGIANCE
○ NOT APPLICABLE

VENICE ACQUIRES DALMATIA 1409

By the 15th century, Venice had become a major European power that dominated the Eastern Mediterranean region. One of its most important territorial gains was its purchase of nearby Dalmatia and Istria in 1409 from Ladislaus, the King of Naples. This aquisition meant that Venice could go on to defeat the forces of King Sigismund of Hungary (who also claimed the territory), with its victory strengthening its control even more. The city-state would rule Dalmatia for the next 400 years. The rise of Venice was a vital component to the early days of the Renaissance, not least because its incredibly prosperous trade routes enabled the core principles of the Renaissance to spread throughout Europe and even into parts of Asia.

Images Alamy, wiki/José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro CC BY-SA 4.0 (Proto-Renaissance), wiki/Craigysgafn CC BY-SA 3.0 (map)

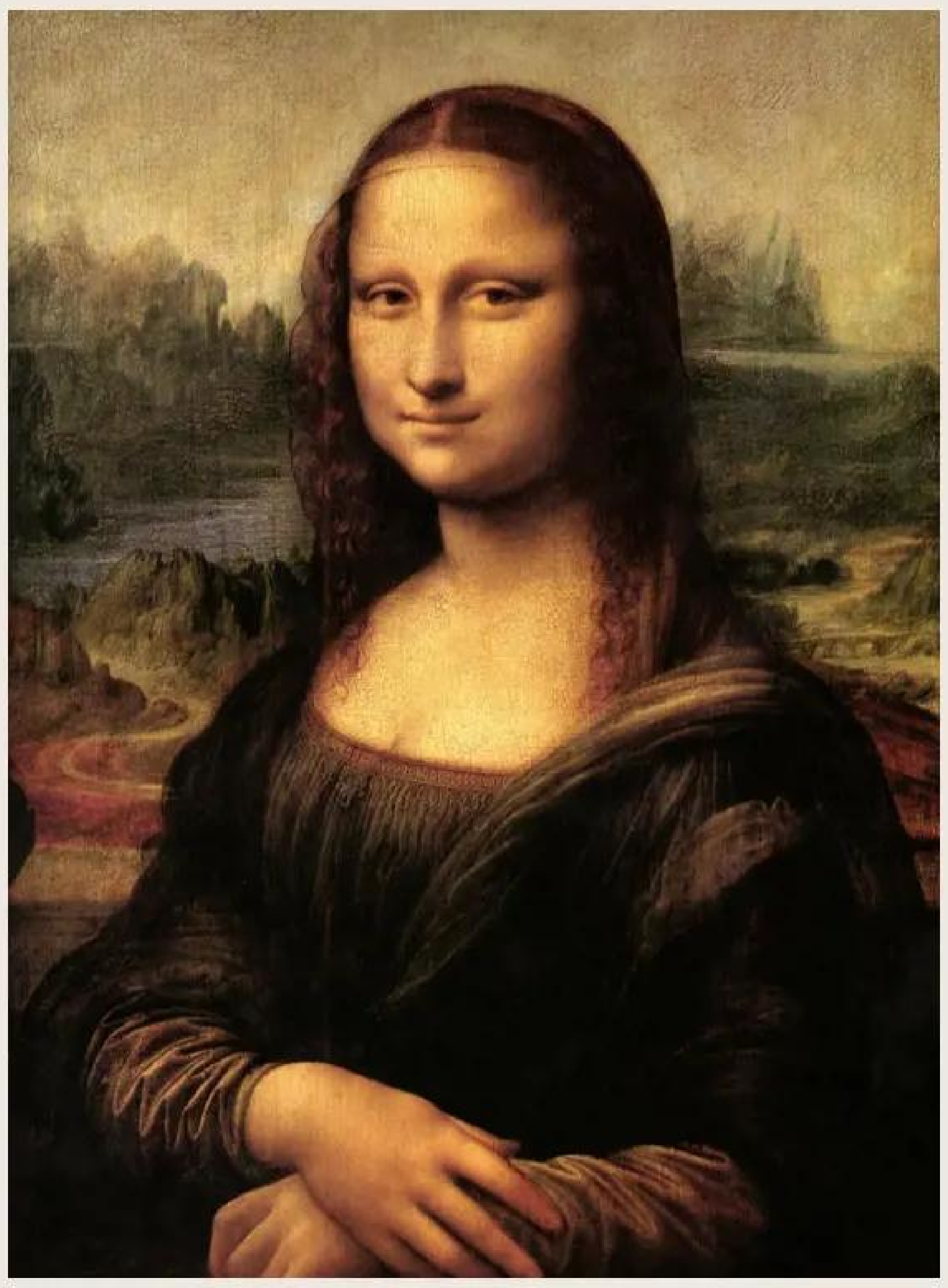


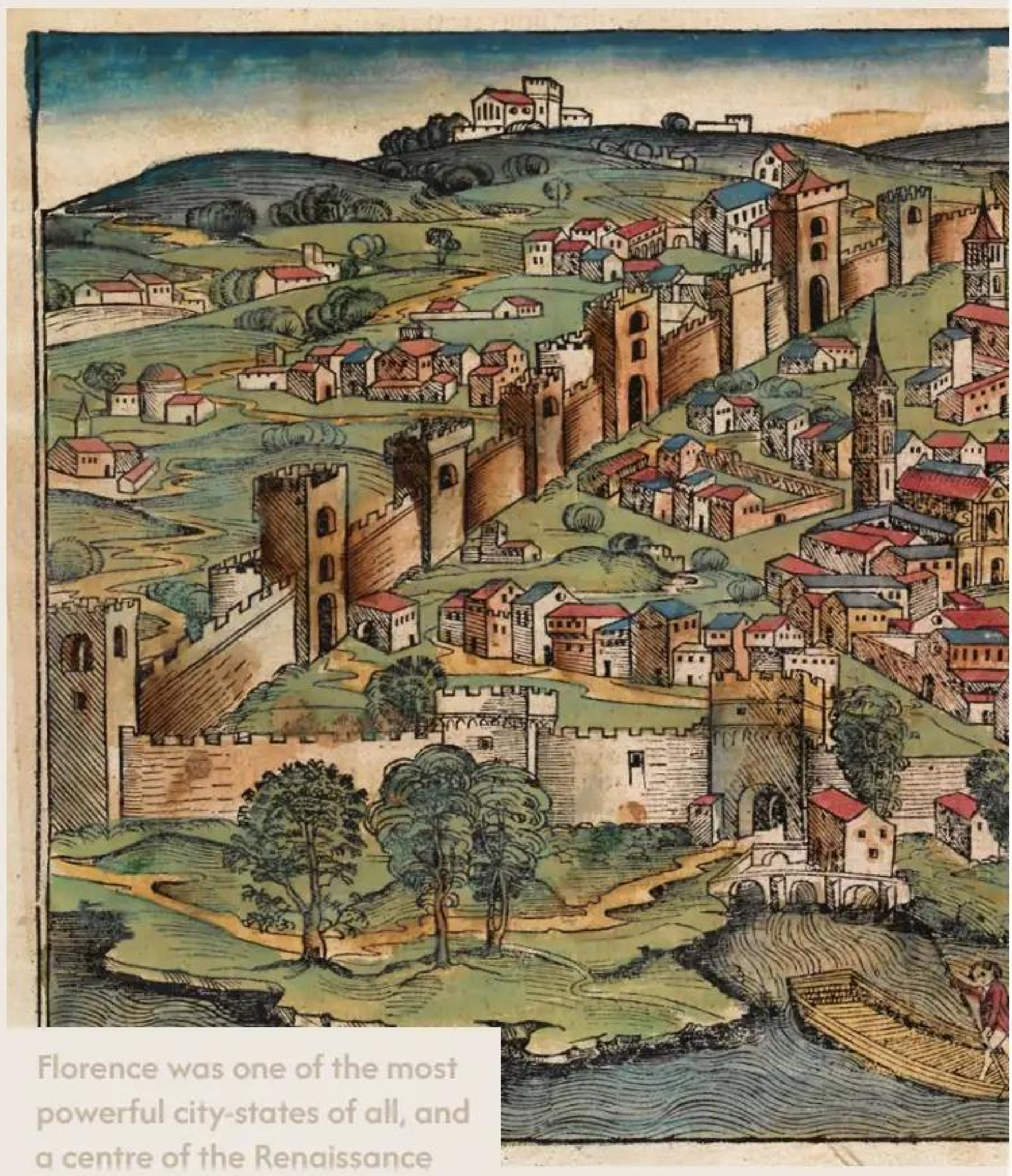
RISE OF THE MEDICI FAMILY 1429

The Medicis were a banking family in Florence who financially supported Renaissance artists, including Michelangelo. The golden years of this dynasty began with Giovanni de' Medici who, alongside amassing vast wealth, was a prominent political figure in Florence. He died in 1429 but his son, Cosimo, inherited his fortune and created a business network over all of Europe. As well as being an astute entrepreneur, Cosimo was educated in the teachings of humanism and had an appreciation for the arts. He authorised the construction of cathedrals and built the Platonic Academy. After his death, Cosimo's son and grandson continued to cement Florence's status as a major power, as well as an architectural and artistic centre. The family fell into decline during the Italian Wars.

GROWTH OF CITY-STATES c.1450s

By the middle of the 15th century, the powerful city-states of Florence, Milan, Venice and Genoa were at peace with the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples. This allowed Northern Italy to become an economic powerhouse in Continental Europe, as Florence grew powerful through trading wool, while Venice prospered from seaward trade. At the same time, the cities saw an influx of refugees, including many scholars and artists, who fled the Ottoman Empire following the fall of Constantinople in 1453. A wealthy merchant class slowly formed as feudalism, which had dominated other areas of European society, began to decline.



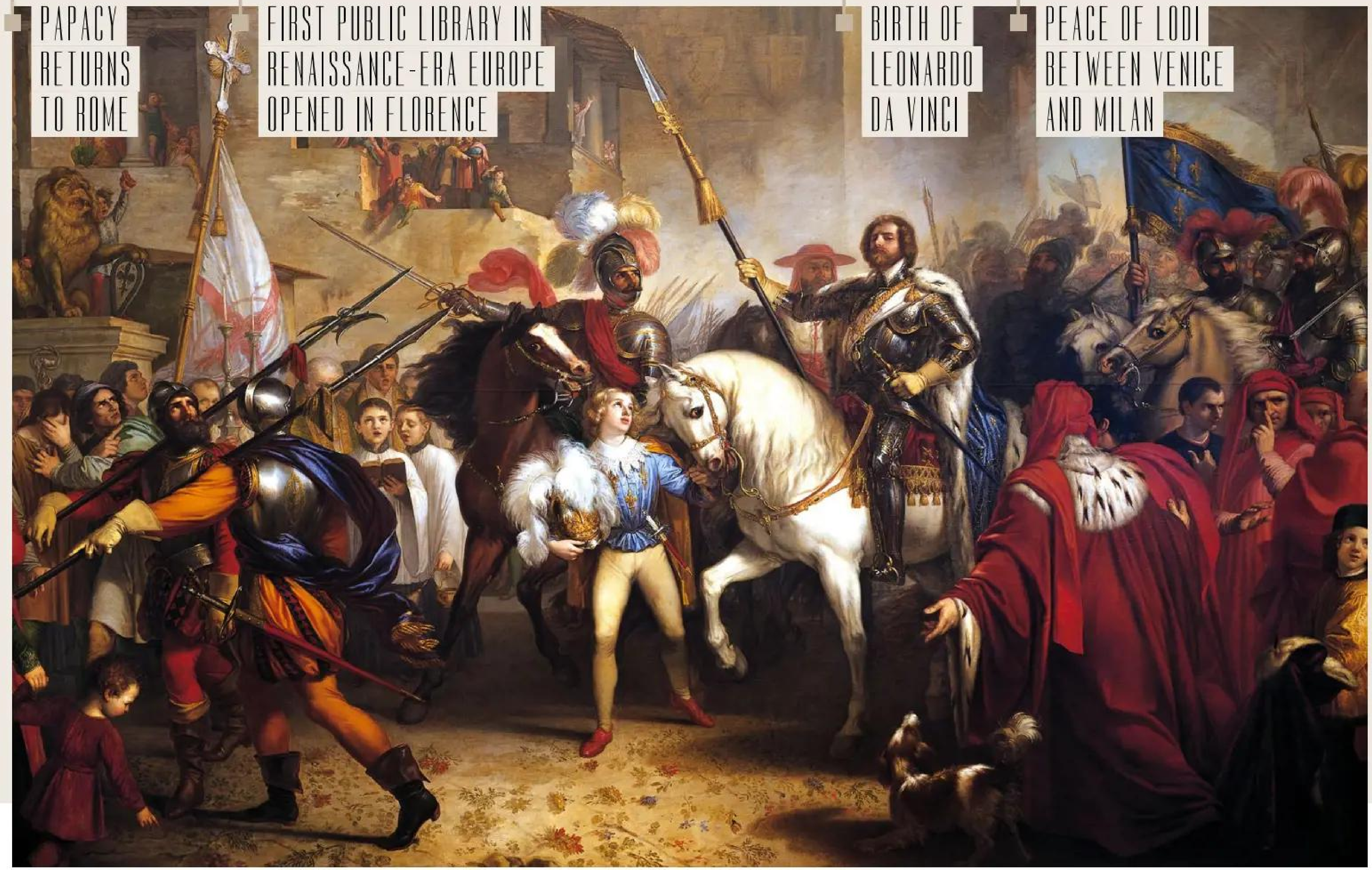


Florence was one of the most powerful city-states of all, and a centre of the Renaissance

HIGH RENAISSANCE 1490-1527

During a relatively short period of time, the Renaissance reached its peak. The most celebrated works produced during this era are those of the artists Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael, who created timeless masterpieces such as the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the *Virgin of the Rocks* and the *Transfiguration* respectively. However, they weren't the only individuals who were influential at the time – there were numerous other artists who furthered developments in architecture, music and a variety of other fields. Humanism also continued to prove extremely influential during this period, and affected many aspects of culture.

1420 | 1429 | 1444 | 1450 | 1452 | 1454 | 1490 | 1494



1420 PAPACY RETURNS TO ROME

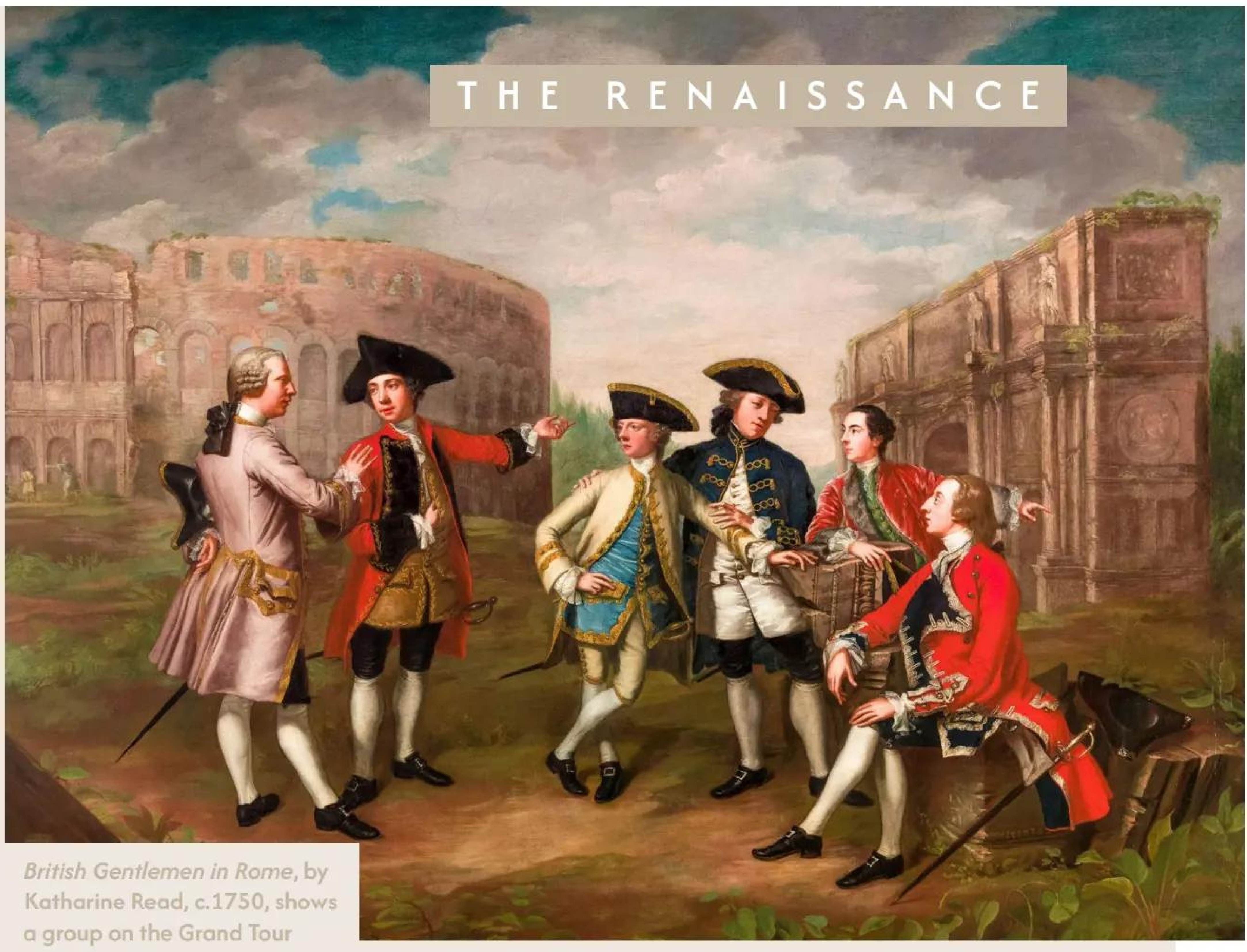
1444 FIRST PUBLIC LIBRARY IN RENAISSANCE-ERA EUROPE OPENED IN FLORENCE

1452 BIRTH OF LEONARDO DA VINCI

1454 PEACE OF LODI BETWEEN VENICE AND MILAN

THE ITALIAN WARS 1494-1559

In 1453, the Hundred Years' War between France and England finally came to an end with the defeat of the forces of King Henry VI. France and Spain now turned their attention to a series of conquests in the Italian Peninsula, thus commencing the Italian Wars. For over 60 years, these violent conflicts rocked the continent. However, a surprising consequence of the wars was the propagation of Renaissance ideas all throughout Europe, as artists fled to safety in other parts of the continent. This spread of ideas was furthered by the introduction of the printing press to Italy in 1464.



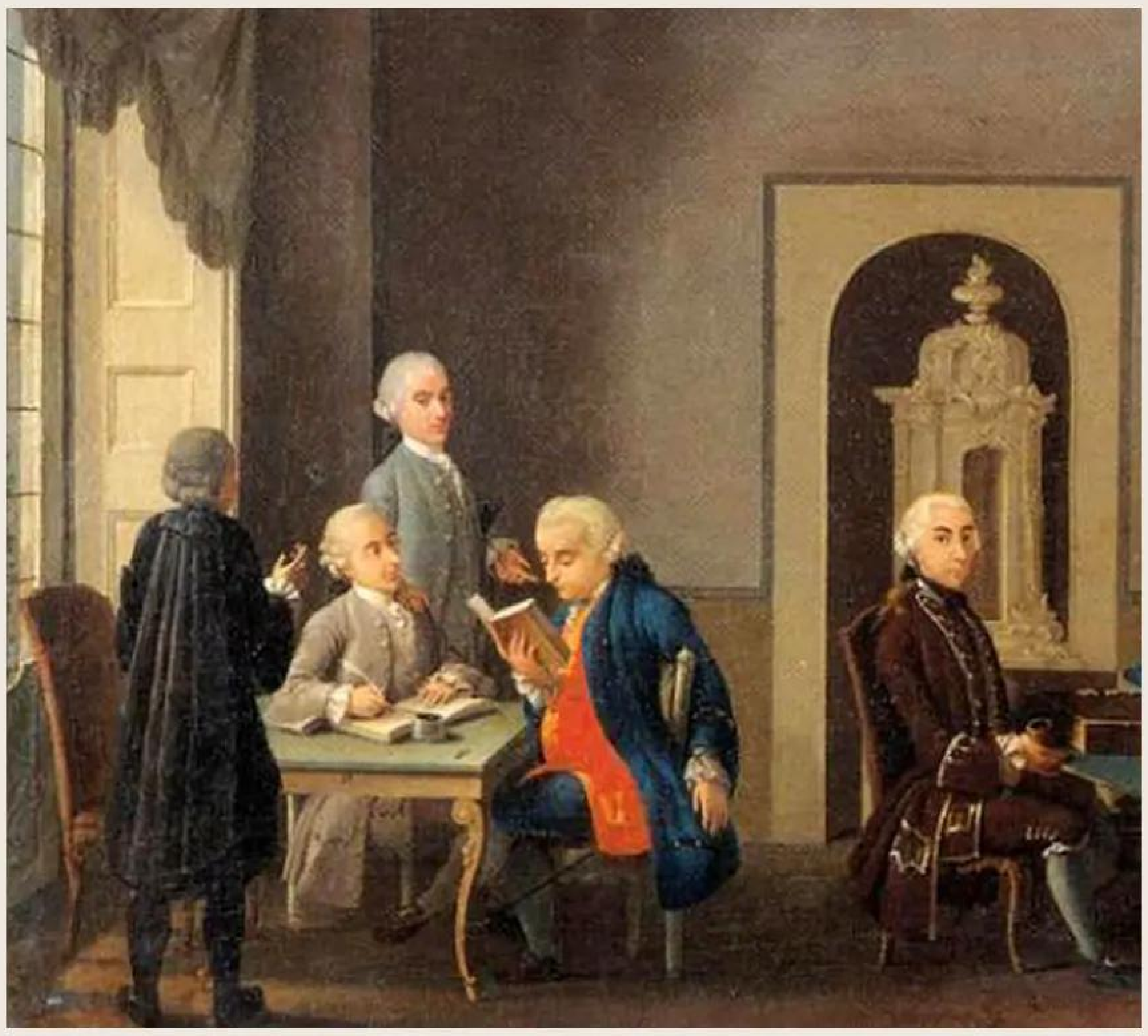
British Gentlemen in Rome, by Katharine Read, c.1750, shows a group on the Grand Tour

THE SACK OF ROME 1527

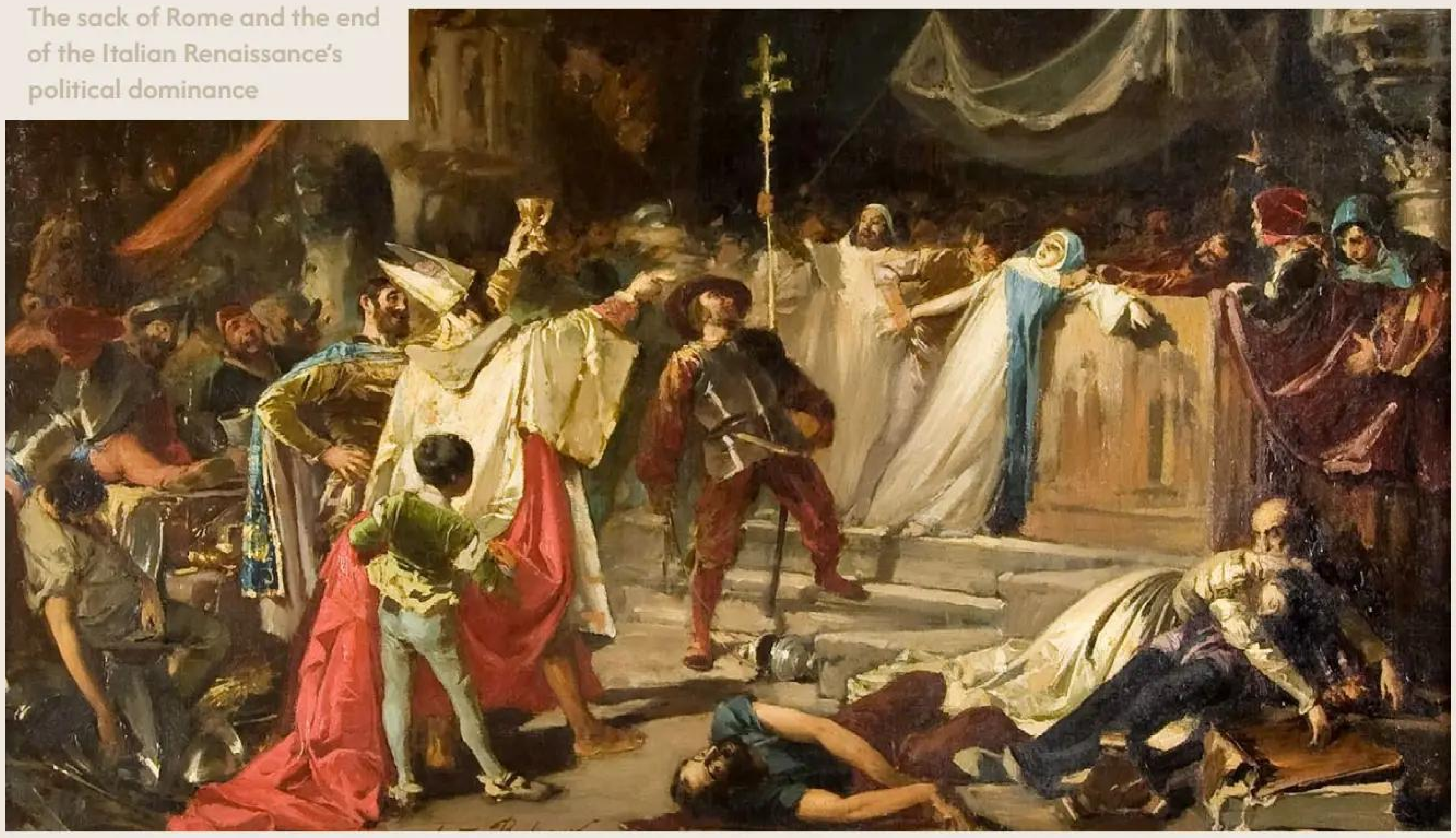
Pope Clement attempted to challenge the authority of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V by forming the League of Cognac. In response, despite orders to the contrary, Charles's troops attack Rome. Over eight days a brutal rampage occurred that led to the death of thousands. Pope Clement was forced to surrender, paying for his perceived treachery in both funds and territory. However, the savagery of the event proved to be a matter of shame for Charles V. While a number of historians believe the Renaissance continued for some time afterwards, this event is considered by many to signal its end.

THE SEICENTO 1601-1700

Throughout the course of the 17th century, Italian culture underwent a transformative period. Key movements include the stylistic Baroque movement, which emerged in Rome and celebrated opulence and grandeur. Baroque styles soon became popular throughout Europe. Wealthy tourists also began to flock to Italy, seeking to educate themselves in classical antiquity and European culture. This concept became known as 'The Grand Tour' and over the following centuries would start to be seen as an integral part of a young gentleman's education.



1527 1601 1750



The sack of Rome and the end of the Italian Renaissance's political dominance

ITALIAN ENLIGHTENMENT c.1750-1800

A new cultural movement, the Enlightenment, began in France but soon swept across Europe. This movement was marked by an increased interest in scientific development and political reform. The centre of the Italian Enlightenment was Naples, which reached its peak during the 1780s. However, important developments took place across all of Italy as we understand it today. For example, in Milan the Accademia dei Pugni (the Academy of Punches) debated political and social reform during the 1760s. In Tuscany, Leopold II introduced a number of reforms, including abolishing the death penalty. In the last decade of the century, Napoleon's armies began a series of invasions on Italian soil, which had a strange effect of both enhancing and suppressing Enlightenment ideas.

Images Getty Images, Alamy, wiki/Flanker CC BY-SA 3.0 (coat of arms)

RISORGIMENTO
THE UNIFI
OF ITALY

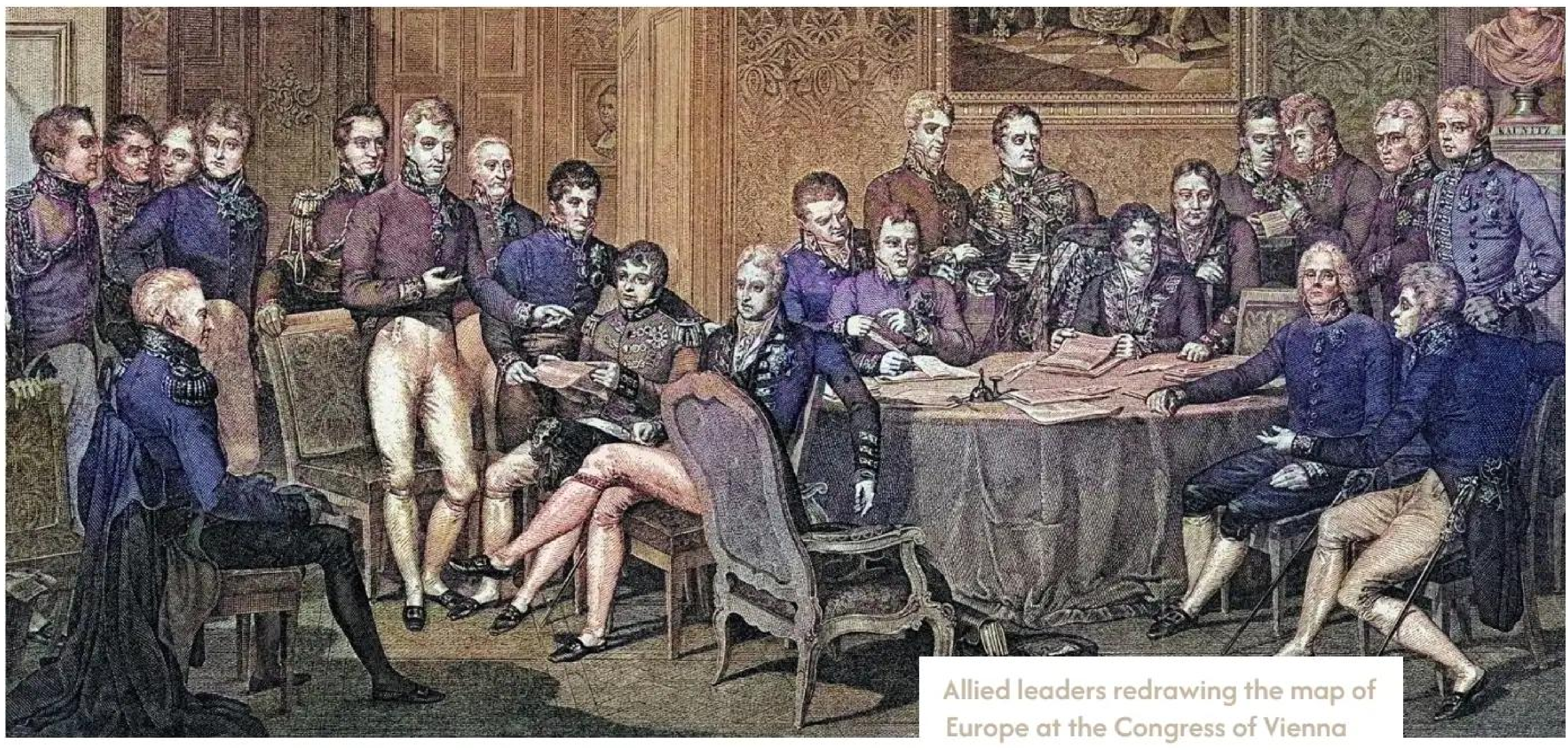
DURING THE 19TH CENTURY, THE PEOPLE OF ITALY SOUGHT TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM THE RULE OF FOREIGN EMPIRES OR SMALL KINGDOMS AND ACHIEVE 'RISORGIMENTO': ITALIAN UNIFICATION

WORDS CALLUM McKELVIE & MICHAEL E HASKEW

19th century Italy was vastly different to the Italy that we know today. For centuries, the proud country had been sliced up and divided as if it was nothing more than a chunk of salami. However, when Napoleon Bonaparte conquered areas of the nation in 1796, and later proclaimed himself king, client states were established and democratic reforms introduced, which saw greater rights given to the people.

Following Napoleon's abdication, in November 1814, 200 representatives of various nations descended on Vienna for a Congress, the aim of which was to shape the future of the European continent and restore the balance between the great powers. The changes implemented at the Congress of Vienna would go on to last for half a century.

For Italy, the Congress meant that the country was divided once more into small kingdoms or lands under the control of foreign powers, such as the Austrian Empire. However, many Italians were displeased at this outcome and a nationalist sentiment began to grow and fester. Over the coming decades, individuals such as Giuseppe Garibaldi or Camillo Benso, the Count of Cavour, used revolutions, diplomacy and wars to ensure that Italy would be divided no longer.



Allied leaders redrawing the map of Europe at the Congress of Vienna

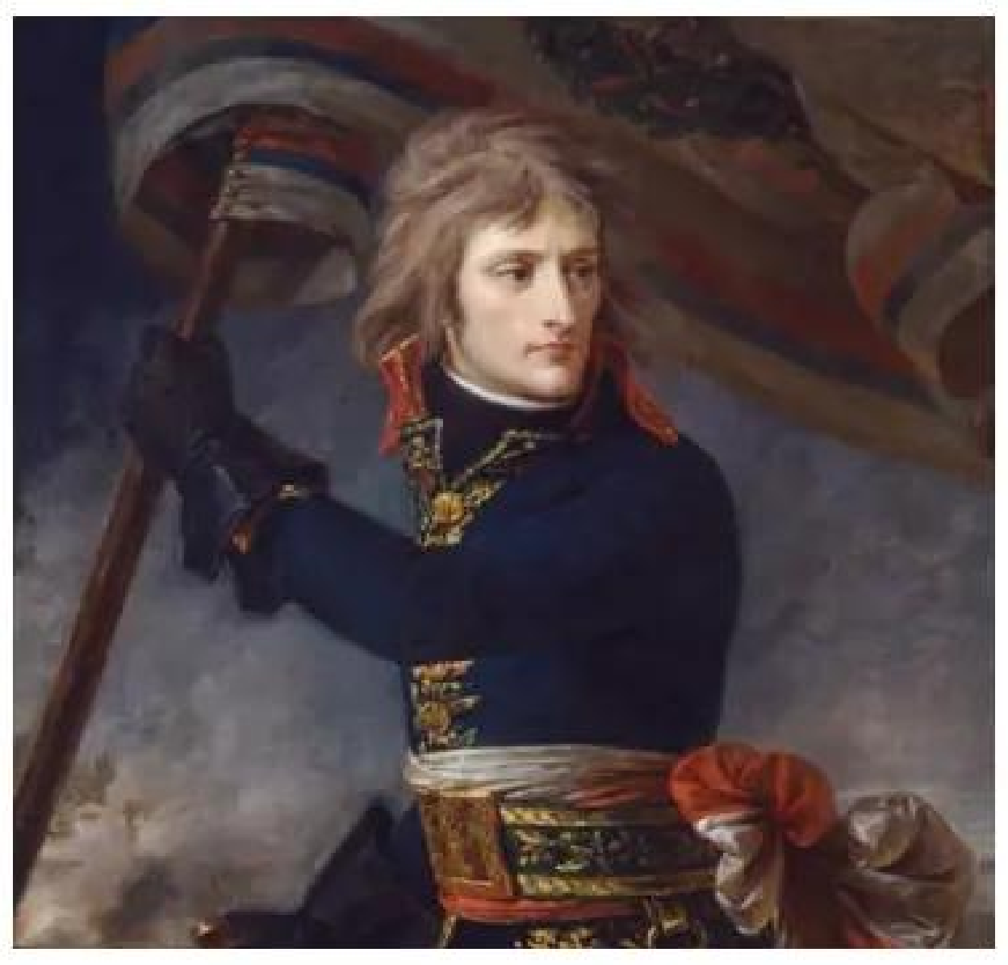
CONGRESS OF VIENNA 1814-15

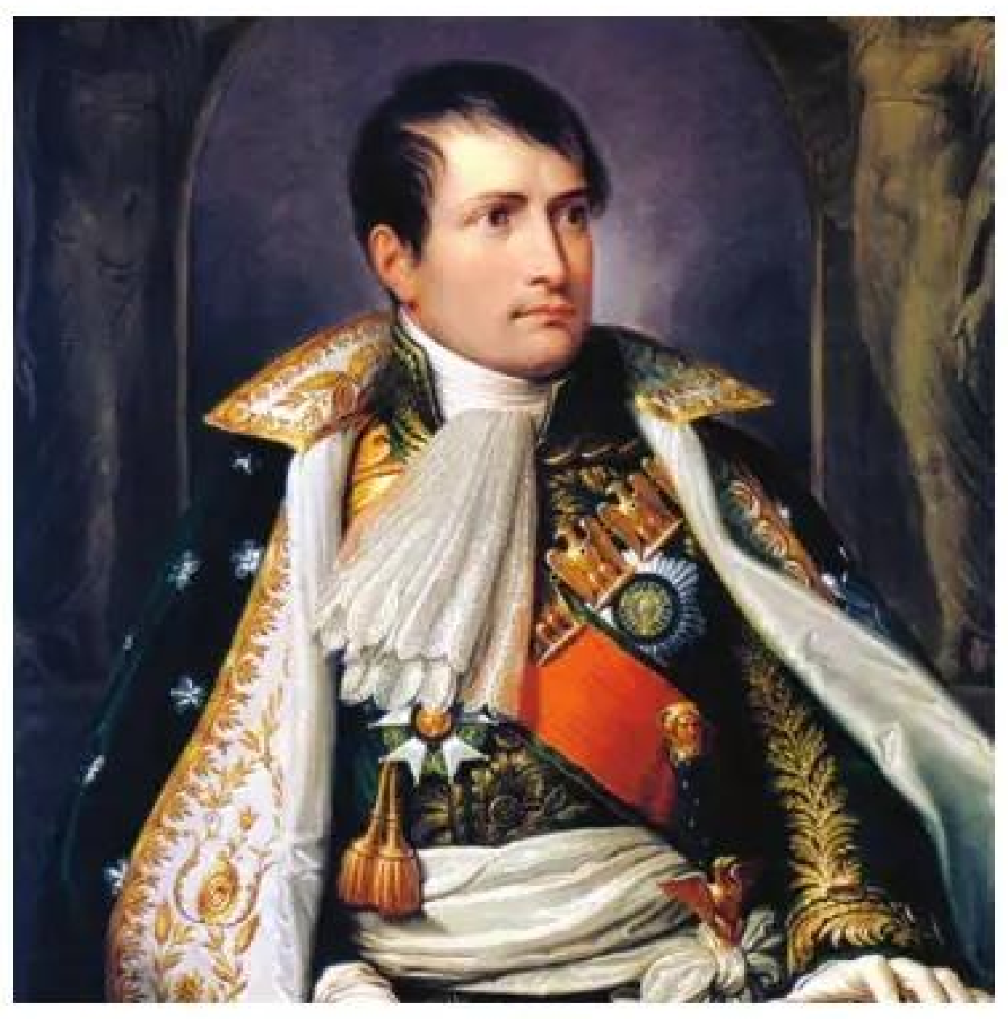
Following Napoleon's defeat, the Congress of Vienna placed much of Italy under the control of the Austrian Empire. Other areas were ruled by other foreign powers, such as Spain, divided into small kingdoms, for example Piedmont-Sardinia, or were controlled by the pope, namely Rome. Many of the democratic freedoms experienced under French rule were rescinded.

1796 1814 1815

NAPOLEON'S ITALIAN CAMPAIGN 1796-97

As part of the French Revolutionary Wars, Bonaparte was tasked with conquering Italy. Although grossly outnumbered, his forces managed to take territory from both the Austrian Empire and Sardinian Kingdoms. This territory remained under French control until 1814, during which time the population experienced significant democratic reforms. In 1805 he was proclaimed 'King of Italy'.





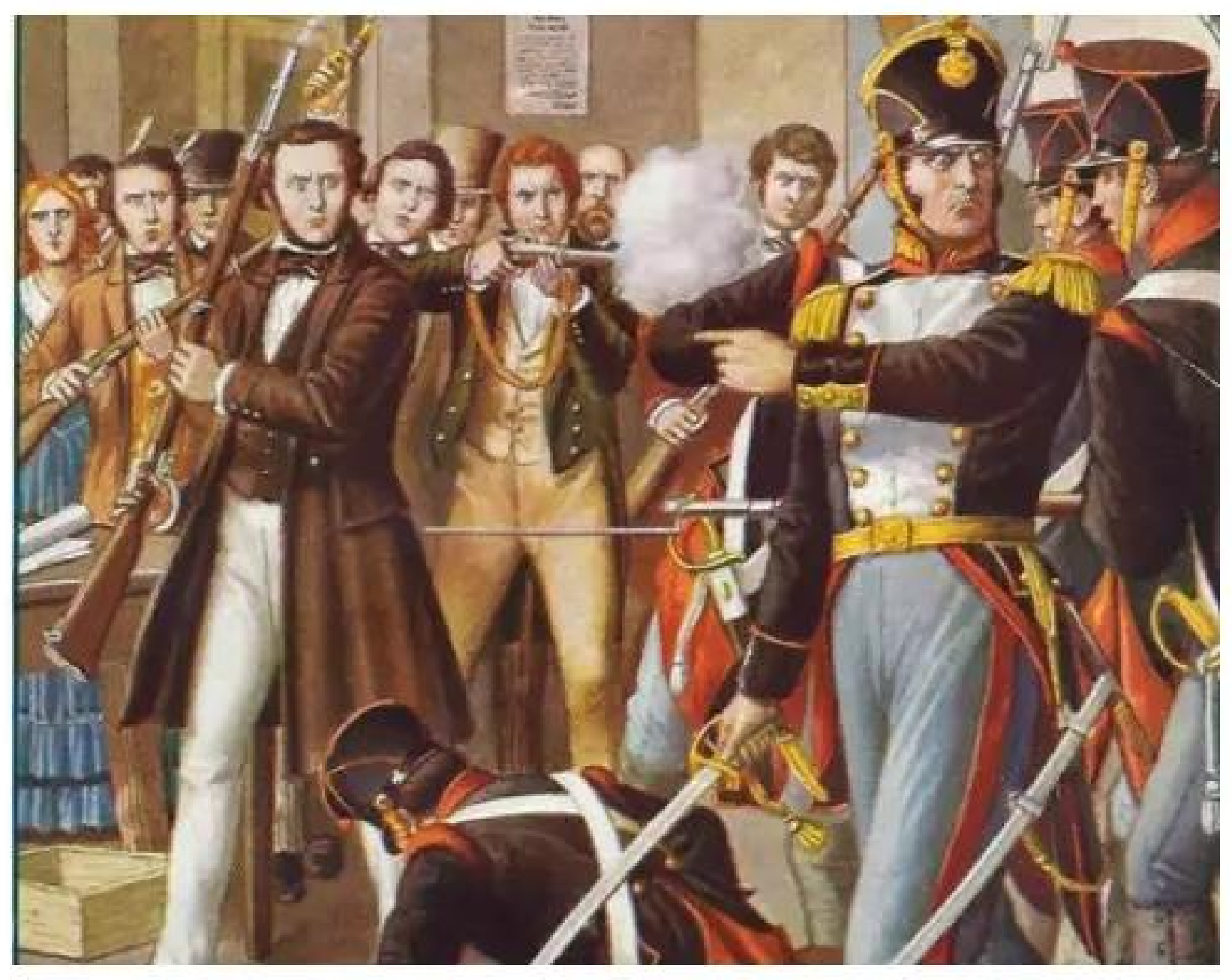
EARLY REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY 1815-30

Influenced by Napoleon's rule as 'King of Italy', revolutionary groups such as the *Carbonari* (Charcoal Burners) dreamed of unifying the Italian peninsula under a constitutional government. Separate insurrections took place in the kingdoms of the Two Sicilies and Sardinia-Piedmont.

CATION

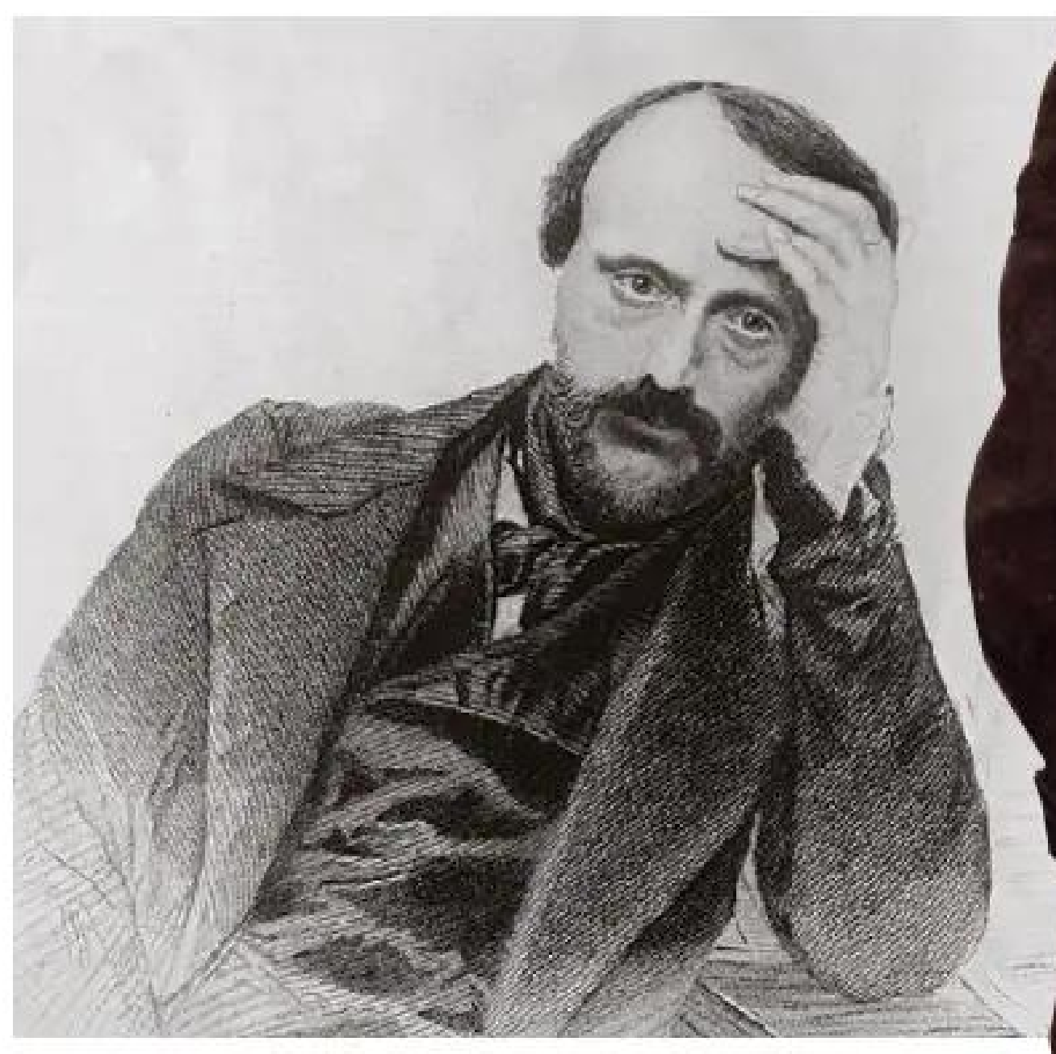
INSURRECTIONS 1830-31

Various states existed on the peninsula in 1830 and the July Revolution in France directly influenced Italian rebels. Insurrections occurred in Modena, the Papal Legations and the Duchy of Parma, which planned to unify as the 'United Italian Provinces'. Pope Gregory XVI asked Austria to suppress the rebels and an Austrian army marched across Italy to crush resistance.



THE YOUNG ITALY MOVEMENT 1831

From exile in Marseille, noted revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini formed the Young Italy Movement in July 1831 as a radical republican society to campaign for unification. Mazzini's methods are divisive. However, the society slowly declined after several failed revolts.



FIRST ITALIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1848-49

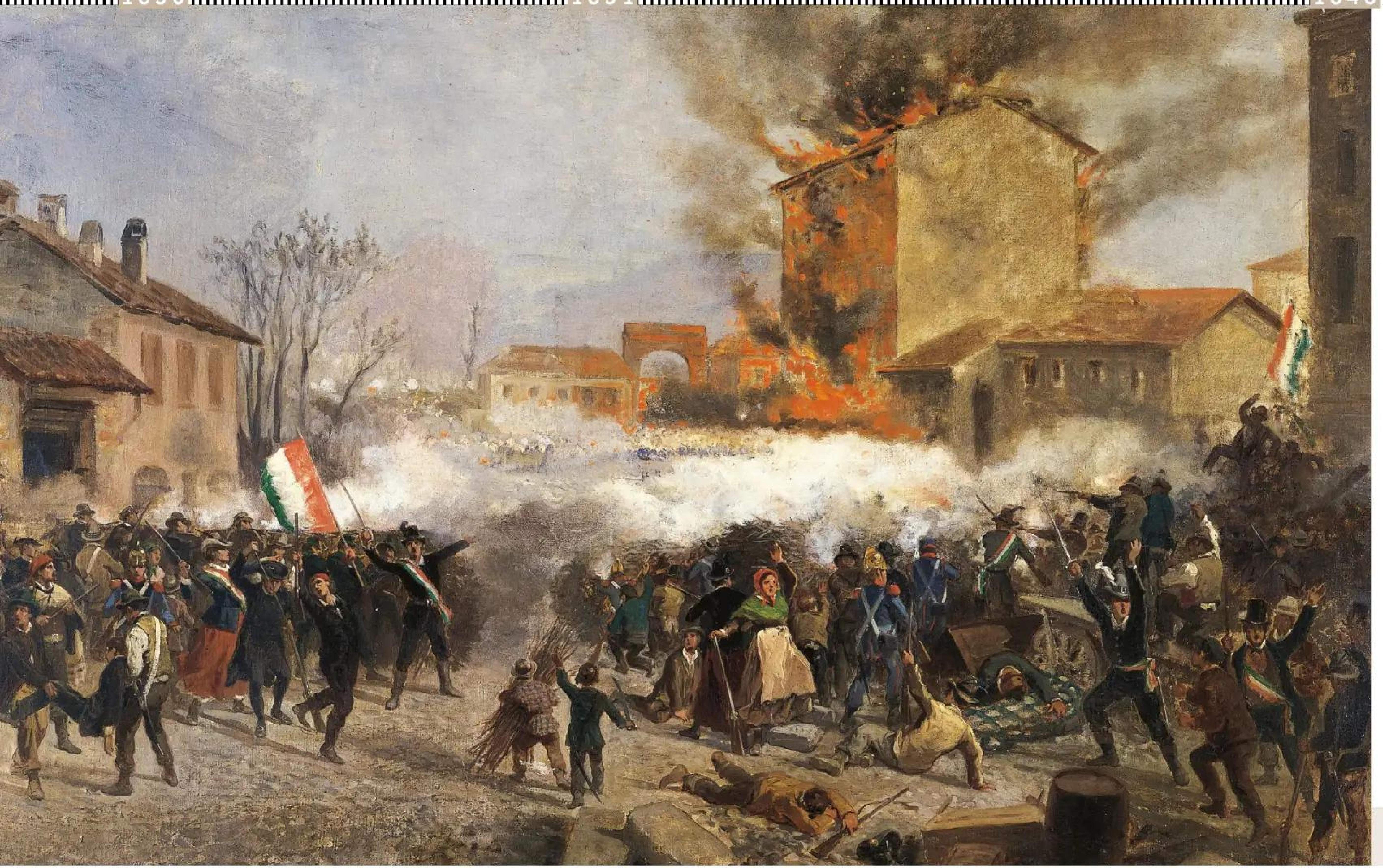
Between 23 March 1848 and 22 August 1849, the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont fights against Austrian rule in northern Italy as revolutions occur in various Italian states. While they are not victorious, the conflict marked the entrance to national prominence of revolutionary, and one of the key figures of the Risorgimento, Giuseppe Garibaldi (left). The chief military leader of the unification, Garibaldi had many progressive views, believing staunchly in Republicanism, advocating for the poor and arguing for the emancipation of women.

1830

1831

1848

1848



1848 REVOLUTIONS 1848

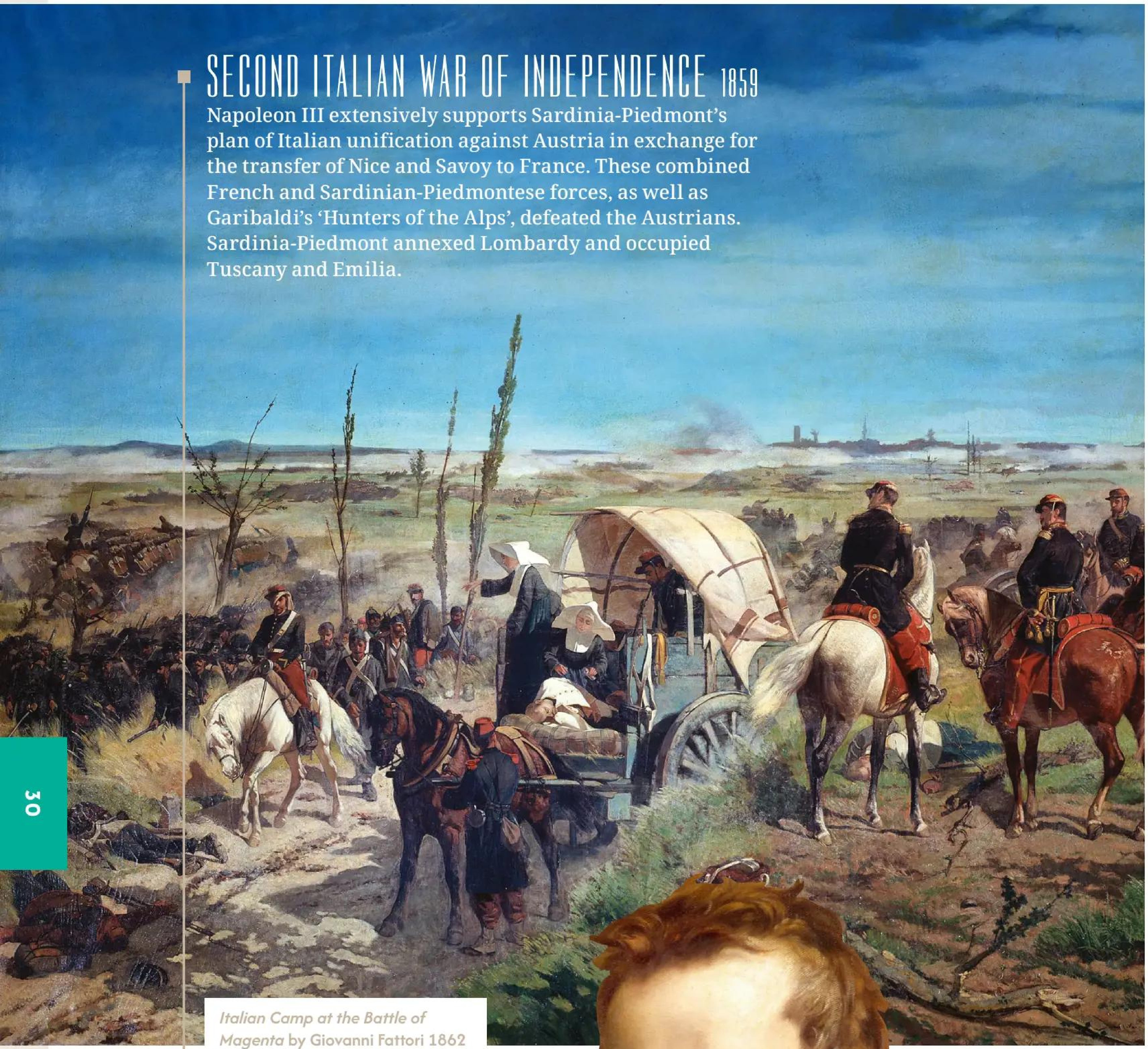
Uprisings against Austrian and The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies' control take place, led by the kingdoms of Sardinia-Piedmont, Lombardy-Venetia as well as the fledgling state of Sicily. These revolts initiated the wider European Revolutions of 1848, as nations rose up against the order reestablished by the Congress of Vienna.

The Five Days of Milan was a major event where rebellion broke out against Austrian rule in the Lombard city between 18-22 March, 1848

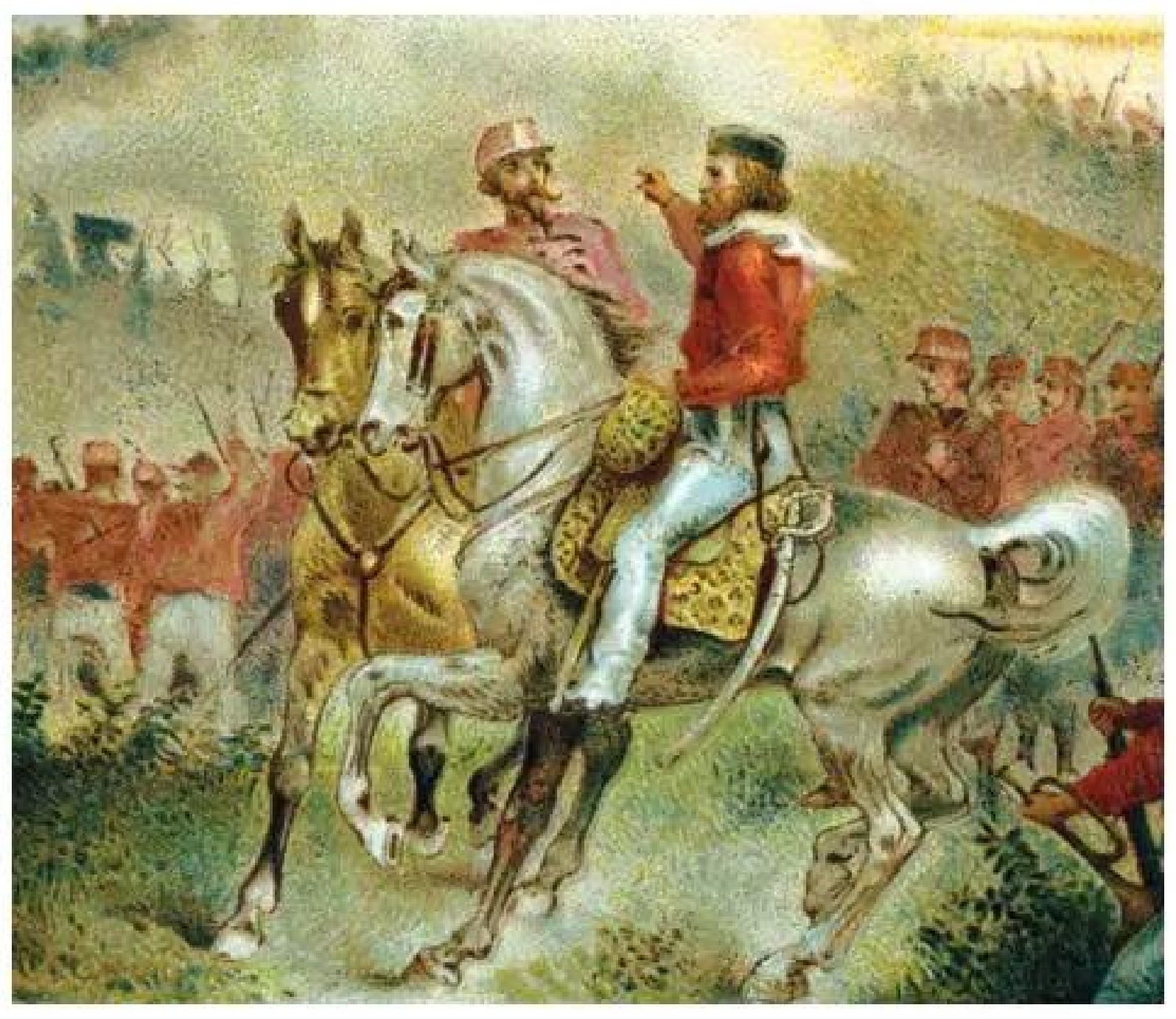
Images Getty Images, Alamy

SECOND ITALIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1859

Napoleon III extensively supports Sardinia-Piedmont's plan of Italian unification against Austria in exchange for the transfer of Nice and Savoy to France. These combined French and Sardinian-Piedmontese forces, as well as Garibaldi's 'Hunters of the Alps', defeated the Austrians. Sardinia-Piedmont annexed Lombardy and occupied Tuscany and Emilia.



Italian Camp at the Battle of Magenta by Giovanni Fattori 1862



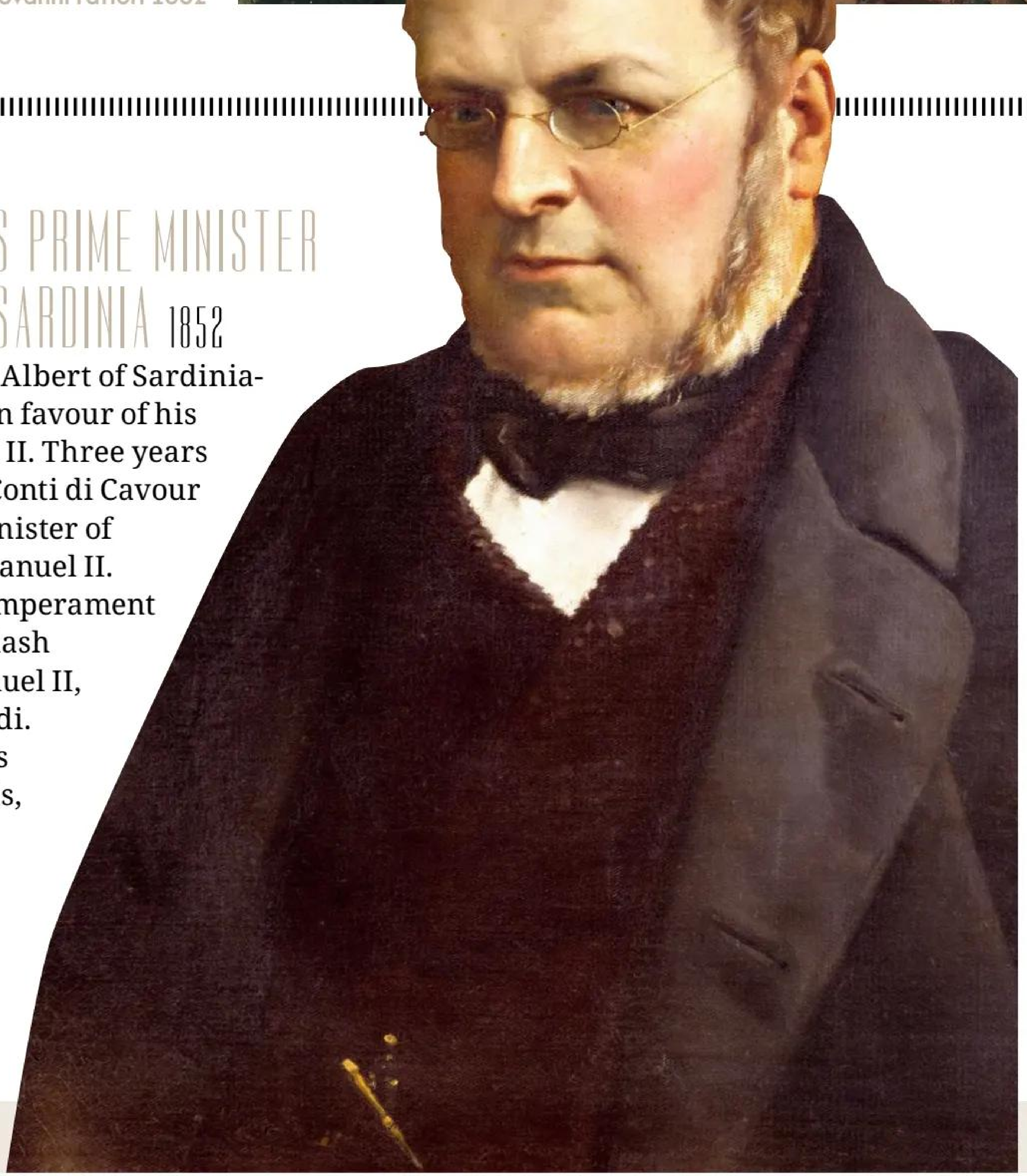
EXPEDITION OF THE THOUSAND 1860-61

With an initial force of only 1,000 men, Garibaldi launched an ambitious venture to conquer the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Despite the odds, the expedition landed in Sicily, where Garibaldi was able to increase the numbers of his troops and subsequently win the battles of Calatafimi and Milazzo. His gamble resulted in a significant Unification victory.

1852 1859 1859 1860

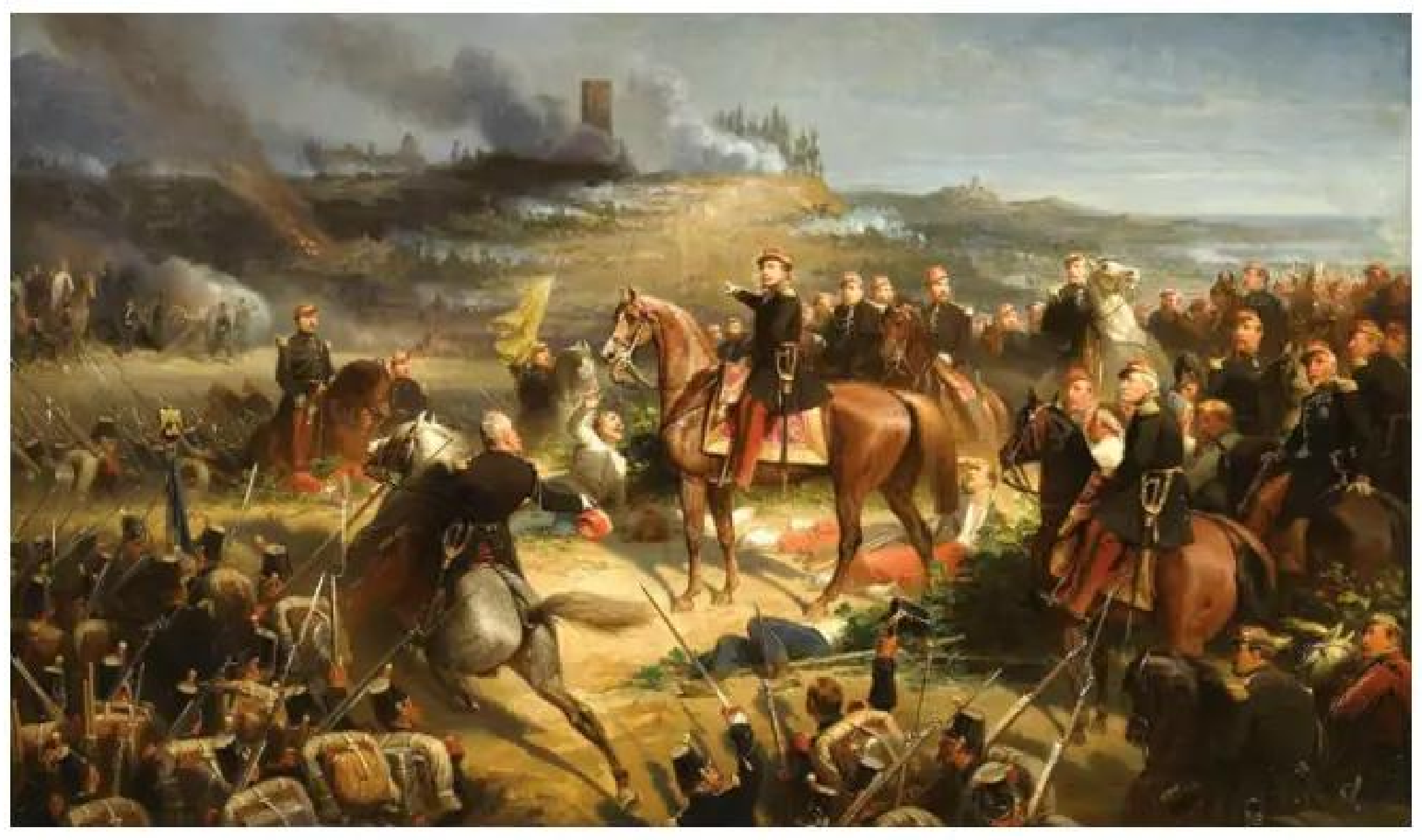
CAVOUR BECOMES PRIME MINISTER OF KINGDOM OF SARDINIA 1852

In 1849, King Charles Albert of Sardinia-Piedmont abdicated in favour of his son Victor Emmanuel II. Three years later, Camillo Benso Conti di Cavour was named prime minister of the kingdom by Emmanuel II. However, Cavour's temperament would cause him to clash not only with Emmanuel II, but also with Garibaldi. Despite his sometimes controversial methods, Cavour is considered to have been one of the architects of the Risorgimento.

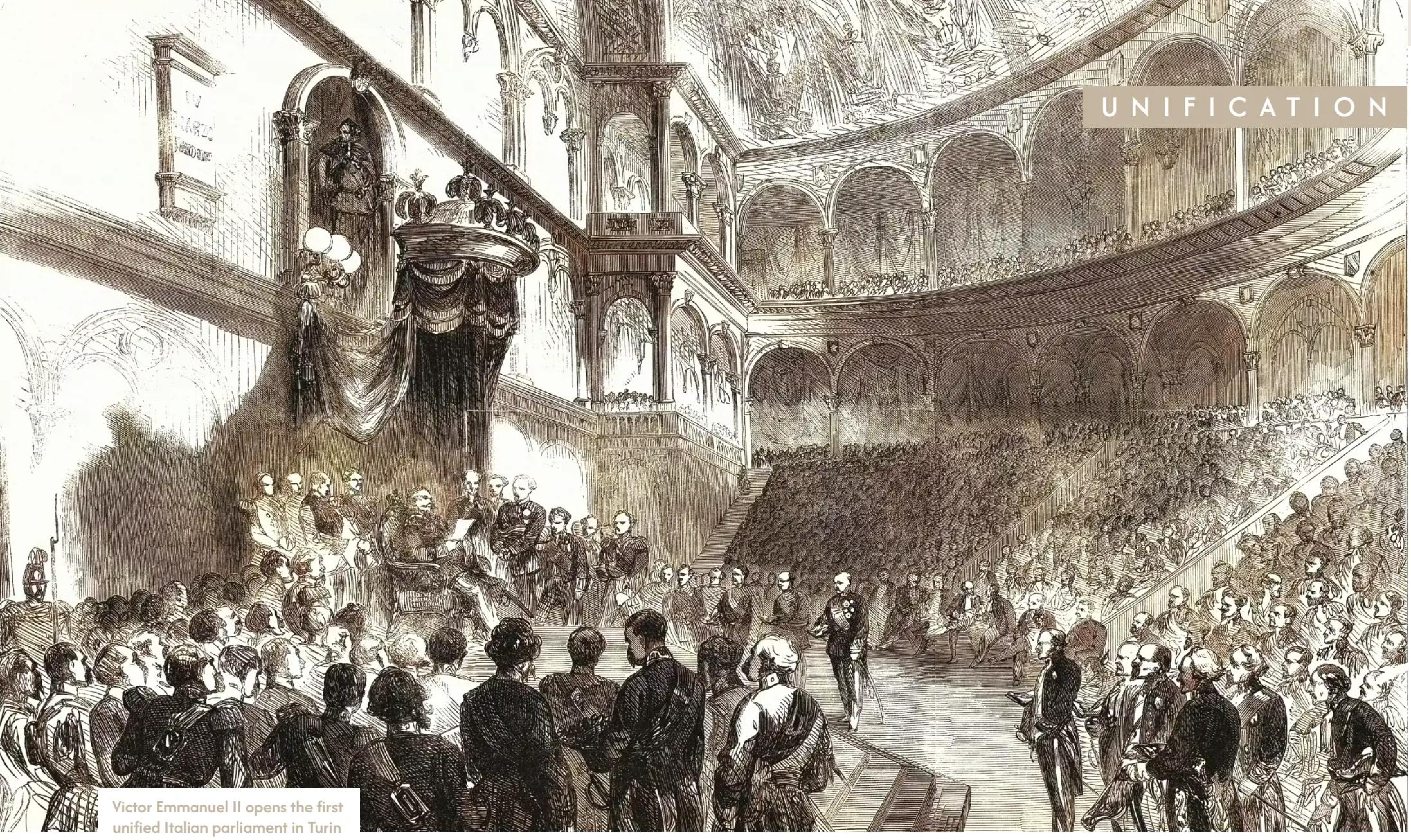


BATTLE OF SOLFERINO 1859

The forces of Napoleon III and Victor Emmanuel II defeated Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria in the largest engagement since the Battle of Leipzig in 1813. As a result, Sardinia-Piedmont added Lombardy to its territory. Solferino was the last battle in history where all armies were commanded by monarchs.



Images Alamy, Getty Images



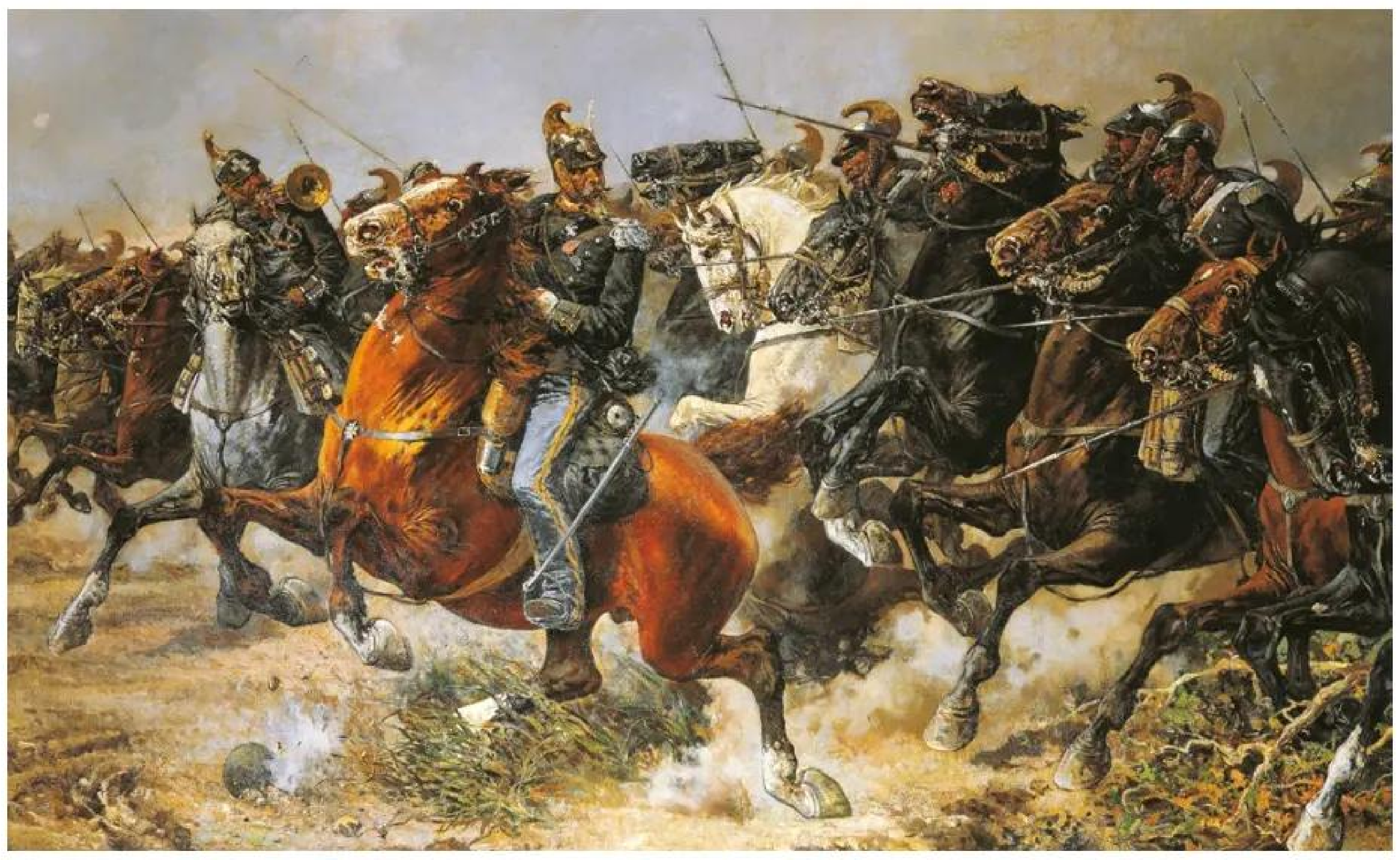
Victor Emmanuel II opens the first unified Italian parliament in Turin

CREATION OF THE KINGDOM OF ITALY 1861

Following the military and diplomatic successes of Garibaldi and Cavour, Victor Emmanuel II was proclaimed as the king of Italy by the parliament of the newly unified country on 17 March 1861. He was the first monarch of a united Italy since the 6th century. In the country at large, only Rome, Venetia and Trentino were left to conquer.

THIRD ITALIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1866

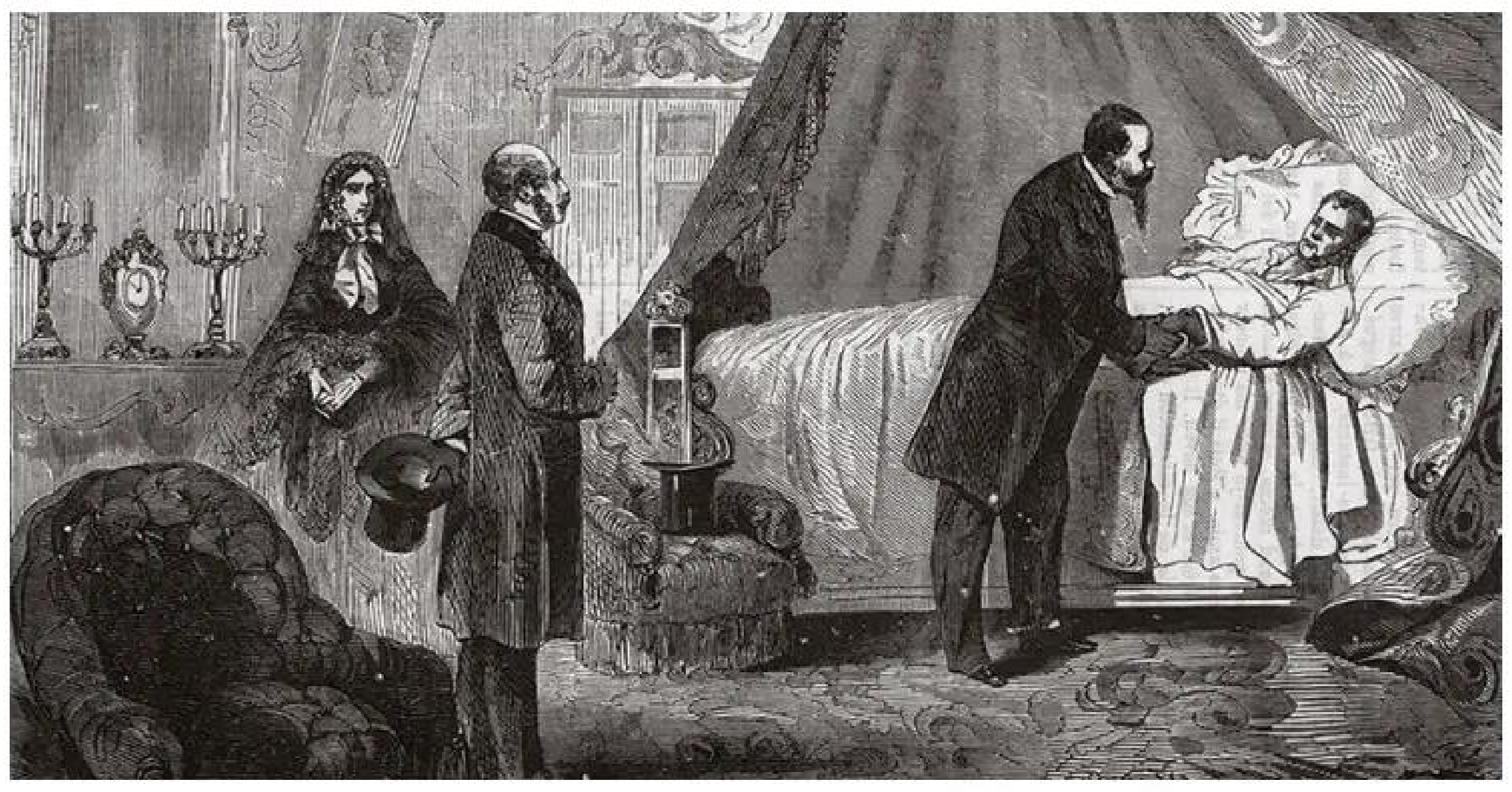
The Third Italian War of Independence saw Italy ally with Prussia to wage war against Austria for control of Venetia. The defeated Austrian forces cede both Venetia and the city of Mantua to Italy. A plebiscite was held that same year to discern if the population would welcome joining Italy and an overwhelming 99.99% agreed. However, the validity of the plebiscite was still argued.



1861 1861 1866 1915

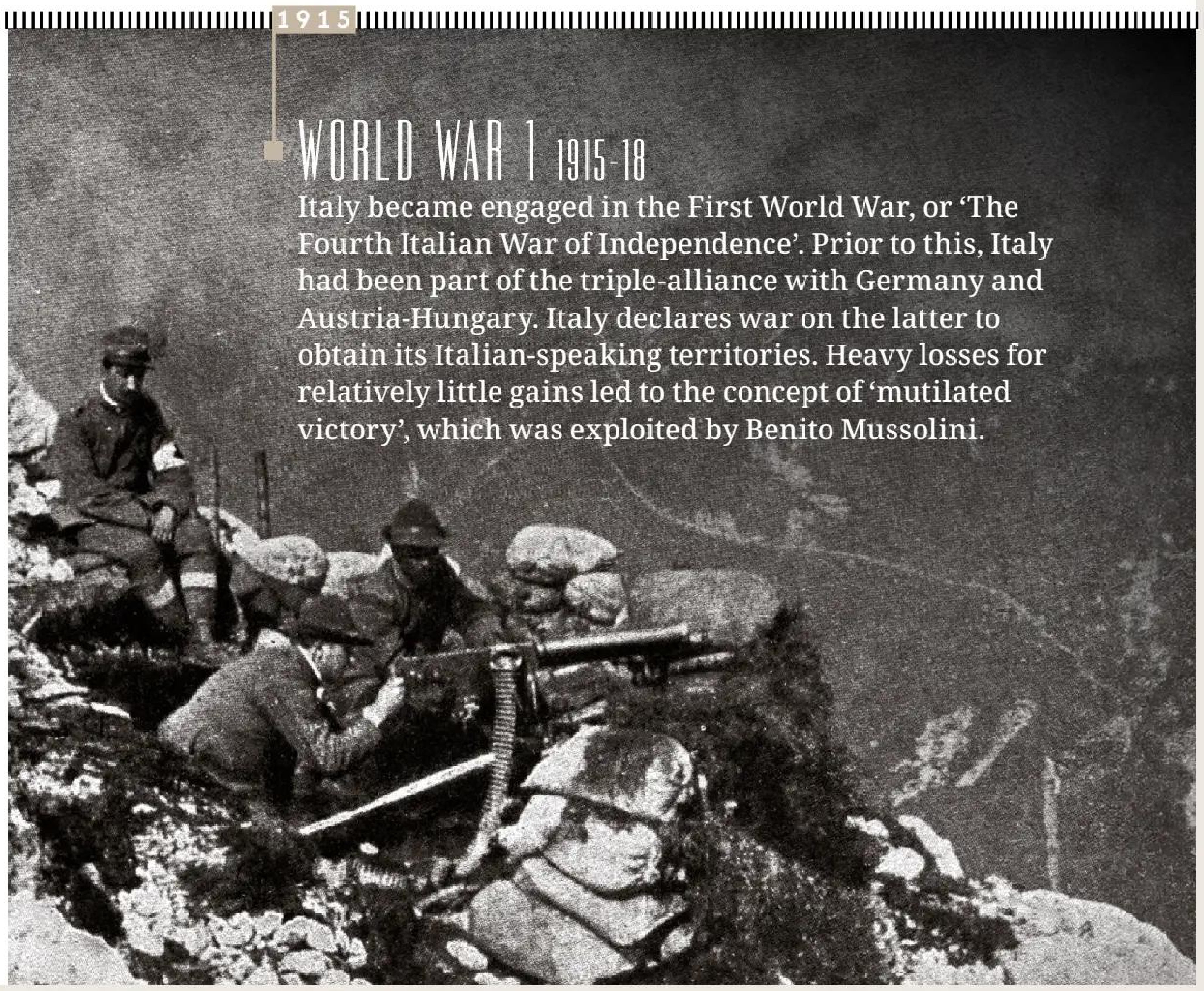
DEATH OF CAVOUR 1861

Three months after taking office as prime minister of the new kingdom of Italy, Count Camillo Cavour died on 6 June. His death leaves the Risorgimento without one of its key leaders and architects. Prior to his passing, Cavour dreamed of Rome joining the new unified Italy as its capital. This dream remained unfulfilled until The Capture of Rome in 1870.



WORLD WAR 1 1915-18

Italy became engaged in the First World War, or 'The Fourth Italian War of Independence'. Prior to this, Italy had been part of the triple-alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Italy declares war on the latter to obtain its Italian-speaking territories. Heavy losses for relatively little gains led to the concept of 'mutilated victory', which was exploited by Benito Mussolini.



MODERN ITALY

THE MOST RECENT CHAPTER IN ITALY'S HISTORY SEES IT NAVIGATING UNITY, FASCISM, TWO WORLD WARS AND A GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

WORDS JAMIE FRIER

The EU flag on the Palazzo Venezia balcony where Mussolini made his speeches, highlighting the stark contrast from fascist regime to a union of democratic nations

After a long, drawn-out succession of wars, the *Risorgimento* was finally complete and Italy was unified. Well, not quite. One final hurdle stood in the way of a truly complete Italy and it was a big one – Rome. Still under the rule of Pope Pius IX and defended by French forces, Rome remained a papal state and defiant against the advancing Italian army. However, when Napoleon III withdrew his troops to fight in the Franco-Prussian War, the army seized its chance. Pius refused an invitation to surrender, leading to a siege of the city. Recognising that resistance was futile, yet still determined to avoid a humiliating surrender, Pius ordered his troops to put up a token fight, conceding as soon as the city walls were breached. So it was, on 20 September 1870, Rome fell to Italy, it and the Lazio region were annexed and the country was whole.

A UNIFIED COUNTRY

King Victor Emmanuel II ruled as the first king of a unified Italy until his death in 1878, when he was succeeded by his son Umberto I, while a succession of prime ministers tried their best to restore the country's perilous financial status. They struggled, which resulted in Italy's political leanings swinging from the right to the left and back again. This new nation was trying hard to find its footing on both the local and international stage.

Tensions with France led Italy into signing a Triple Alliance with Austria and Germany in 1882, a partnership that would have huge consequences a few decades later. This was during their attempts to expand their borders into North Africa, with incursions into Ethiopia especially (the Ethiopians fought back in 1896, handing Italy a major beating and ending the prime ministerial reign of Francesco Crispi). Italians kept looking to expand their horizons, with over 200,000 emigrating to the Americas in 1888 alone, searching for a different way of life.

Political and ideological disputes continued to plague the country, with widespread land sales creating a new, land-owning middle class, which angered the existing upper and middle classes. Agriculture was still the dominant economic force, with around 60 per cent of finance coming from farming in the late 19th century, but Italy was starting to diversify. Steelworks became a key industry, as was a first foray into motorcars with Fiat, something with which Italy is still intrinsically linked. It was around this time that social reforms really started to take hold, as concepts like maternity pay, child labour laws and rest days were brought in by the socialist government. Italy was finally finding its feet and its personality as the 19th century came to a close and the 20th century began.

WAR IN EUROPE

However, looming on the horizon was the spectre of World War I. Despite that pre-existing agreement with Austria-Hungary and Germany, Italy wasn't in any rush to join the Central Powers. Instead, officials negotiated with both sides to see what they could get out of the conflict. The majority of Italy, including the ruling government, were in favour of neutrality, but eventually, in May 1915, it joined the side of the Allied Powers of Great Britain, France and Russia. That initial reluctance to join the war appeared to be borne out by its efforts. Italy repeatedly suffered huge losses in battle, causing the resignation of the government in 1916, while military desertions and protests were widespread. Italy finally experienced success with victory in the Battle of Vittorio Veneto. and soon after, the war was won by the Allies. The war came at a huge cost for Italy, in terms of deaths, morale and finances. However, as part of the agreement that saw it enter, it was awarded Trentino, South Tyrol and Trieste from the Austria-Hungary empire.

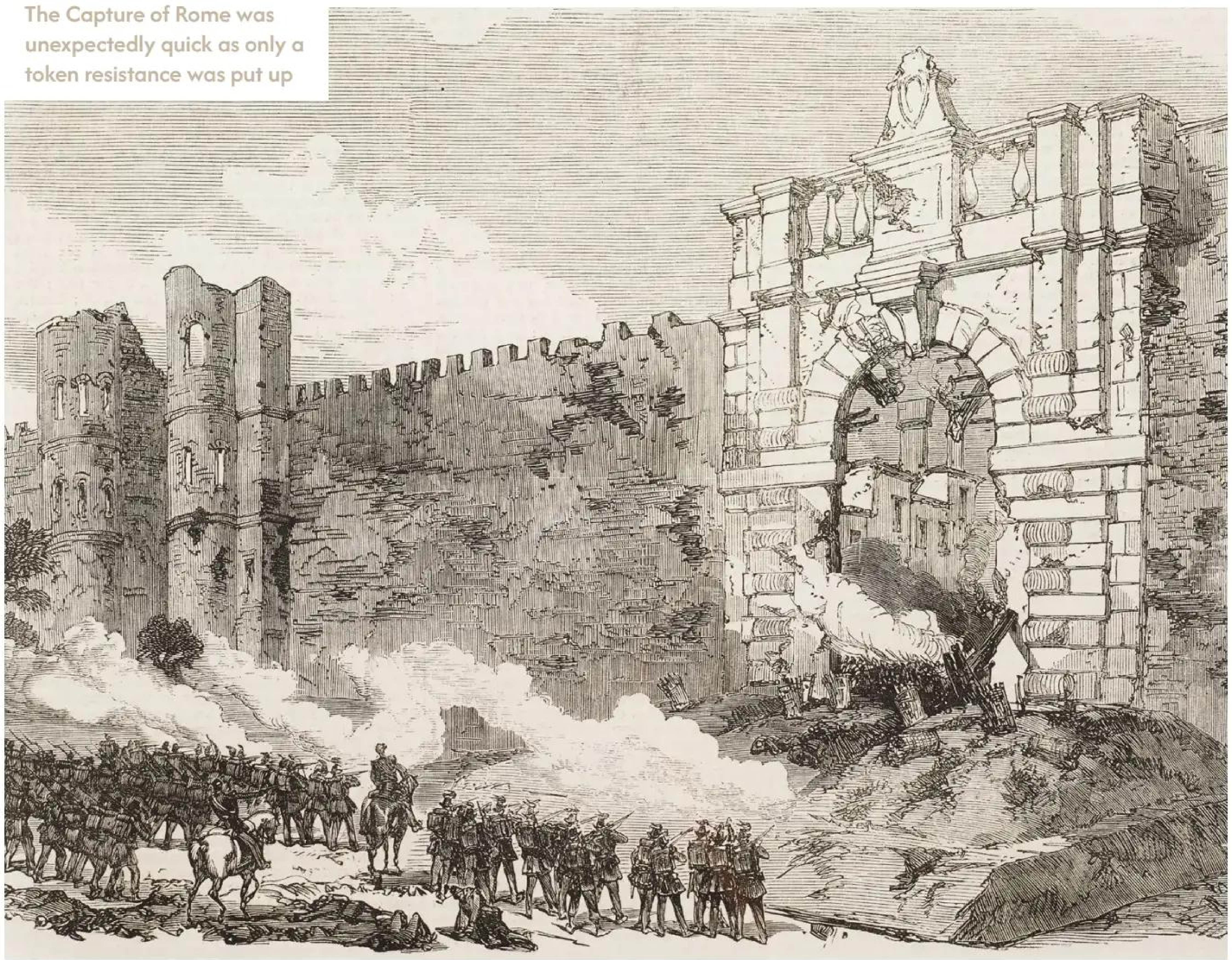
The post-war years were not happy ones for the Italians. Strikes, protests, collapsing governments and political and social upheaval were almost constant presences for the next few years. The country, which it's worth remembering had only been a unified nation for less than 50 years, had to deal with mass unemployment, inflation and disgruntlement from the general population. As so often happens in these situations, those feelings of dissatisfaction led to a major political swing, on this occasion from the liberal left to the fascist right, led by Benito Mussolini.

THE FASCIST YEARS

Somewhat surprisingly, Mussolini started life as a firebrand socialist, preaching an anti-war message as he was made editor of

> “ON 20 SEPTEMBER 1870, ROME FELL TO ITALY, IT AND THE LAZIO REGION WERE ANNEXED AND THE COUNTRY WAS WHOLE

The Capture of Rome was unexpectedly quick as only a token resistance was put up



Images Getty Images

Italy's leading socialist newspaper. However, his desire for social change, coupled with the belief that this could only be achieved after war, caused him to do an about turn and suddenly he was passionately pro-war.

Following World War I's conclusion, Mussolini embarked on a political career, launching a group called the *fasci di combattimento* (fighting bands), whose purpose was to disrupt socialism, quell strikes and promote a nationalist message, often through violent means. Mussolini's strength as an orator drew huge crowds and support to his cause and the Fascists, with their black-shirted uniforms, became politically significant, grabbing powerful positions in many areas of the country before gaining 35 seats in parliament in 1921. However, Mussolini was not happy there. Through violence, intimidation and fear, Fascists steadily increased their power within Rome itself, before his coup de grace.

With the trade unions announcing a general strike, Mussolini took the opportunity to claim that he and his Fascists would stop the strike if the government couldn't. They made good on that promise through yet more aggressive tactics before announcing a march on Rome to seize power. Unable or unwilling to stop the thousands of Blackshirts from launching a devastating offensive on the capital, King Victor Emmanuel III resisted calls to enact martial law, instead offering Mussolini the chance to form a government. He did so, creating a coalition with several political rivals in senior positions, but rapidly went about altering the political system and landscape that would enable him to rule as a dictator. Fascists dominated the 1924 elections and, despite the assassination of one of his staunchest critics in parliament, Giacomo Matteotti, causing a huge headache for Mussolini, he retained and enhanced his reputation as the figurehead of Italian politics.

Mussolini set out a huge project of social reform, but also the erosion of civil liberties such as elections, a free press and free speech. He and his people either banished or murdered opponents and dissenters, replacing them with his own supporters, to ensure he could continue to rule unopposed. Mussolini's ambitions didn't end at his own borders, either. He moved into Albania and waged a brutal war against Ethiopia, which was eventually won to the horror of the rest of Europe. Well, not all of Europe. Over in Germany, Adolf Hitler was watching Mussolini's rise to power and followed suit, the pair creating a Pact of Steel. Mussolini then followed Hitler in imposing draconian anti-Jewish laws, to widespread condemnation and fear. Mussolini also sent troops to support General Franco in Spain as Europe edged closer to another devastating war.

SWITCHING SIDES

Despite Mussolini's close relationship with Hitler, Italy was once again hesitant to follow Germany into conflict. It was over a year into World War II, with France on the brink of surrender, that Mussolini decided to launch his country into battle, despite mass opposition. However, once again, Italy wasn't successful. Incursions into Greece via Albania, battles in its North African empire and a supporting role in Russia were all catastrophic failures and the former two involved Germany pulling resources from battle to help its fellow Axis power. Italy, as it was a quarter-century earlier, was a demoralised, unwilling and ineffective fighting force – more of a burden than a help. Allied forces landed in Sicily, forcing a retreat of Italian and German troops. British and North American battalions swept northwards, pushing the Axis back, both sides suffering heavy losses.

Anti-fascist voices had been moving quietly against Mussolini for some time, with the leader distracted by war, and in July 1943, urged the King to dismiss the dictator from his position – something Victor Emmanuel III did. Mussolini was interred on the island of Ponza, before being transported to a mountainside hotel, where he was busted out by German forces who installed him as a puppet government leader in Northern Italy. He eventually realised his position was untenable and, while trying to escape Italy to Switzerland disguised as a German soldier in April 1945, Mussolini was captured and executed, later strung up in a town square alongside his lover and several fellow fascist leaders. Italy, now under the prime ministership of Pietro Badoglio, surrendered in September 1943, declaring war on Germany the following month. German forces effectively took over the country, killing swathes of Italians and causing the monarchy to flee south. Italy was the scene of a confusing and deadly network of battles between Allied forces, Axis forces, Italians on either side and often fighting among themselves as differing ideologies clashed. However, the death of Mussolini, followed days later by that of Hitler, brought an end to the second bloody global conflict of the century.

The continental clean-up and recriminations were to get underway. Italy signed a peace treaty with the Allies that saw its empire crumble, and some of the lands gained following World War I lost. Ethiopia, Libya, Eritrea and Albania were some of the countries that were given back, while territories such as several Aegean Islands, Adriatic Islands, Zadar and Rijeka went to Greece and Yugoslavia respectively.

OUT WITH THE OLD

One further victim of fascism and World War II was the Italian monarchy. Rampant disgust at Victor Emmanuel III's tolerant attitude towards Mussolini and fascism, as well as the decision to leave Rome and Northern Italy to the Germans during the war increased anti-monarchist sentiment in the country. A vote was held in June 1946 to decide whether the country would remain a monarchy or become a republic, and the latter won with 54 per cent of the vote. King Umberto II, who had only become monarch a month earlier following his father's abdication, was exiled along with his family and Italy entered its Republic era.

Benito Mussolini's populist rhetoric and personality catapulted him to the top of Italian politics, before a dramatic fall

Enrico de Nicola (on right, with US President Truman, left), became Italy's first president in 1946

> ITALY IS NOTHING IF NOT A CHAOTIC, EXCITING, ENIGMATIC COUNTRY

After centuries of being ruled by dictators, monarchs and Caesars, Italy was now in a bold new point in history. All adults, including women for the first time, elected deputies who were responsible for drawing up the new Italian Constitution. After 18 months of wrangling, the document was in a position to be voted on in the House, where it passed emphatically and became law the following year. The deputies involved were mostly from three main parties – the Communist Party, Christian Democrats and Socialist Party. The Fascist Party of Mussolini was all but wiped off the political map and the Constitution heavily geared towards its eradication. It also set out the rules, ideals and structures by which Italy promised to be governed as it attempted to ensure the mistakes of the past weren't repeated. Citizen rights, the system of governance, the Constitutional Court and the method of transition were all enshrined in the new document.

Enrico de Nicola, who had been elected as head of state while the Constitution was being drawn up, was voted in as the first president of Italy, but had to resign five months later through ill health to be succeeded by fellow liberal, Luigi Einaudi. The Christian Democratic Party, however, was the one that dominated Italian politics thereafter, with every prime minister between Alcide de Gasperi in 1945 right to Arnaldo Fornaldi in 1981 coming from that party, while Giovanni Gronchi and Antonio Segni held the presidential seat for nearly a decade.

The political system was reorganised multiple times, with proportional representation the most common, which resulted in lots of coalition governments that required delicate negotiation to govern the country. Silvio Berlusconi was one of the most recognisable and controversial of Italy's prime ministers, having served three terms amid allegations of corruption, sex scandals and attempts to pass laws granting him immunity from prosecution.

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Despite these issues, Italy's strong economic growth through manufacturing and agriculture saw the country prosper and become a European powerhouse. It was a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949 as well as the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. It hosted the 1956 Winter Olympics and 1960 Summer Olympics, attracting attention from all over the world. Italy, for all its past trials and tribulations, was becoming a part of the European elite and a key partner for trade and international affairs. This was cemented in 1992, when it signed the Maastricht Treaty, while also becoming one of the first 11 countries to adopt the Euro. However, Italy has not been without its troubles in the financial world. The adoption of the Euro was meant to ensure the government, often made up of a coalition that rarely lasted long, would take longer-term approaches to financial decisions. However, this didn't happen and an already struggling economy was pushed to the brink by the mid-noughties global financial crisis. Decisions made to rescue the Eurozone negatively impacted Italy and it survived by the skin of its teeth.

Rarely has Italy done things the easy way. Whether it's taking on the Catholic church to unify the country, fighting on opposing sides in two world wars, or coming to a financial precipice from a decision meant to bring security, Italy is nothing if not a chaotic, exciting, enigmatic country with more cultural, political, religious and ideological changes in its short existence than many others have had in a much longer history.

RELIGIOUS SEPARATION

How Italy battled the mighty Catholic Church from unification to divorce

Italy and the Catholic Church have been linked forever. Well, it's hard not to when the HQ is on the outskirts of your capital city. After marching on Rome to unify the country in 1870, the Church still loomed large in Italy's culture and politics, instructing Catholic men not to vote in the country's elections. However, in the 1920s, the Catholic Popular Party became one of the biggest in the country. In 1929 Mussolini agreed the Lateran Treaty with the Church, where they officially recognised Italy with Rome as its capital, while in return, the independence of the Vatican City was also recognised, creating the world's smallest country. However, things really started to change in the 1960s. Despite obvious objections from the Church, divorce became legal in Italy in the 1970s, followed by abortion. Then in 1984, Roman Catholicism ceased to be Italy's official religion. Church and state were separated.

Vatican City's position as an independent state came about due to the Lateran Treaty

Images Getty Images

VIA

Image: Getty Images

AGGIO

TRAVEL

TURIN

UNCOVER THE CULTURAL GEMS FOUND IN THIS INTRIGUING CITY

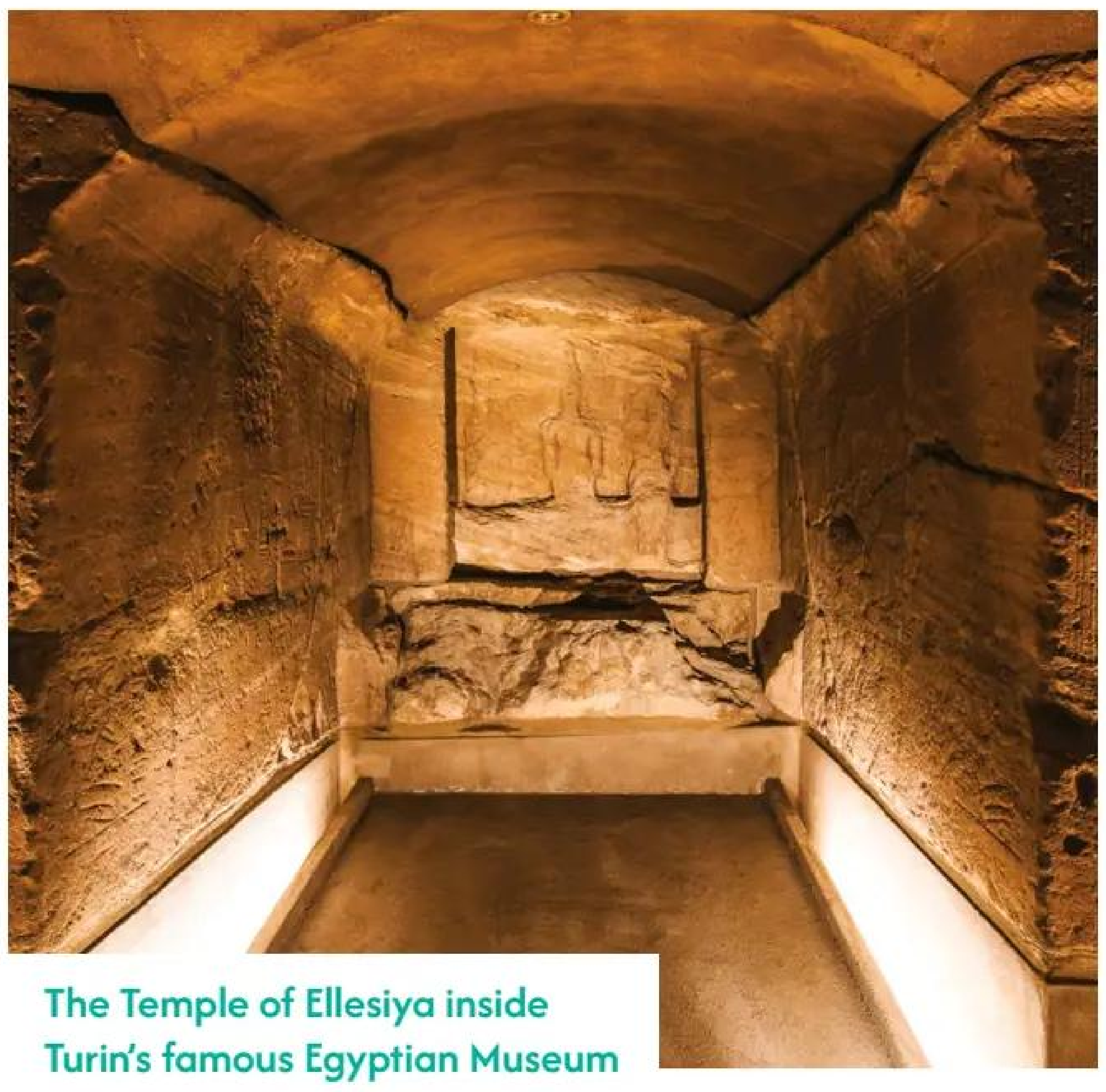
Piazza San Carlo is the perfect place to see fine Baroque architecture

Like many Italian cities, Turin's piazzas are a great place to observe everyday life and admire its architecture. The Piazza San Carlo is arguably the finest of Turin's piazzas, and brilliantly showcases the city's Baroque history. Two exemplary Baroque churches, Santa Cristina and San Carlo Borromeo, are situated at the south of the square and are open to visitors wanting to view their decorative and peaceful interiors.

A large park, Parco del Valentino, on the west side of the Po river, also provides a haven for tourists and is an excellent place to spend time exploring. A magical landscape, the park is full of surprising features including fountains, statues, sculptures, botanical gardens and even a reconstructed medieval village and a grand castle. Bicycle tours of the park can be booked online or, for those wanting to explore the park under their own steam, bikes can also be rented from shops across the city.

Turin's renowned Egyptian Museum is the second-largest collection of Egyptian artefacts in the world and is open to visitors seven days a week. Housing spectacular ancient relics like the Temple of Ellesiya and the contents of the tomb of Kha and Merit, wandering around the galleries of this magnificent museum transports visitors back in time. Or for film buffs, the National Museum of Cinema provides magical escapism through interactive light shows, projections and much more. Mole Antonelliana, the museum's building, was originally intended as a synagogue and is an iconic landmark in Turin's cityscape. The towering structure also houses a panoramic lift with views across the city and out to the surrounding Alps.

Of course, the religious relic of the Shroud of Turin is worthy of a visit. Purported to be the cloth that covered the buried body of Jesus Christ, the Shroud is safely kept in a stunning purpose built chapel inside Turin's cathedral, where a replica is on public display. Aside from the holy shroud, Turin is also famous for its successful football team Juventus FC. Many football fans travel to the city to watch a game at the Allianz Stadium, where pre-booked tours can be arranged and the Juventus Museum can be visited. EMILY STANIFORTH



The Temple of Ellesiya inside Turin's famous Egyptian Museum

TOP TIP

Tickets for guided walking tours around the Mole Antonelliana, discovering its hidden architectural details, can be purchased online.

Images Alamy

MILAN

THIS NORTH ITALIAN CITY IS PEERLESS WHEN IT COMES TO ART AND DESIGN – IT'S NOT BAD FOR A SPOT OF RETAIL THERAPY EITHER

While Milan hasn't got the headliner appeal of Rome or Florence, it's absolutely stuffed with things to do. Because it's a large city, it's wise to plan ahead… so let's start with the big hitters you need to book online beforehand.

There are three sights we recommend booking in advance. First up, the spiky Duomo di Milano, a must-visit 14th-century cathedral that took 600 years to make, and boasts more statues than any other cathedral in the world. You may be able to snaffle some tickets on the day but if you buy ahead you'll skip the long queues. Now for the biggy: Leonardo's *The Last Supper*. Buy your tickets for this uber-famous masterpiece a few weeks in advance – and maybe more if you're going in summer. Third on the list of book-ahead experiences is the world-famous Milanese opera house, La Scala – but only if you're visiting during opera season, which runs between December and June.

Of course, Milan is about way more than big-budget sights; in fact, many of its loveliest corners are al fresco, including the Monumental Cemetery. This is not only the final resting place of many famous Italians but also a visual feast with its fantastically decorated tombs. Then there is Sforza Castle, an impressive 15th-century fortification located just outside the historical centre.

One of our favourite areas is Navigli, where two of the city's canals converge. It's a quiet area during the day but comes alive for the after-work aperitivo culture, where bar owners serve drinks and complementary small plates. You can also take bikes from here on the Naviglio Martesana, a canal-path route from Milan to Cassano d'Adda.

Milan is an amazing place for art lovers, and its works span many centuries, from *The Last Supper* right up to Maurizio Cattelan's 2010 middle-finger sculpture. The arresting fist sits in Milan's financial district and seems to be a comment on bankers' responsibility for financial crises. Hangar Bicocca is a popular contemporary artspace, an erstwhile locomotive manufacturing plant in the north of the city, and there's Fondazione Prada, another gallery this time housed in an old distillery and showing a mix of temporary exhibitions and permanent works from artists like Louise Bourgeois and Dan Flavin. Fans of Wes Anderson will be delighted by the bar he designed on the premises – Bar Luce. Pinacoteca di Brera is a great gallery that shows Italian paintings all the way through from the 14th to the 20th century.

For design lovers the Triennale di Arte Decorativa showcases the history of Italian design, while The Armani/Silos showcases hundreds of the designer's sartorial hits. And don't forget that Milan is a great place to shop, from the designer stores in the glass-vaulted Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, which links Piazza del Duomo and the Piazza della Scala, to Corso di Porta Ticinese and its Portobello Road vibe. RACHEL IFANS

The canals in the Navigli district of Milan are a popular spot for drinks, food and nightlife

Image Getty Images

VENICE

NAVIGATE THE UNIQUE WATERWAYS OF ITALY'S CITY OF BRIDGES

WORDS **JAMIE FRIER**

Venice is known throughout the world as the City of Canals, among many other names. One such name is the Floating City, made up as it is of 118 islands connected by canals, which can be crossed by one of 400 bridges. It measures just eight square kilometres (three square miles), but packs an astonishing number of stunning landmarks, cafés and activities into that small space.

Conveniently, three of those landmarks are all within a couple of minutes' walk from each other – namely Doge's Palace, St Mark's Basilica and St Mark's Square.

Doge's Palace is the spectacular result of a project lasting several centuries. Started in the 9th century, the seat of the Venetian government continued to be developed and redeveloped until well into the 17th century. This drawn-out building process means that the palace features an array of architectural styles, from Gothic to Renaissance – guaranteed to delight both the casual and committed architecture enthusiast. The palace wasn't only the Venetian Parliament; it was home to the Doge, and has also acted as a prison and the city's court, but is now a fascinating museum. It may be worth more than one visit too, because the palace changes colour throughout the day depending on the light – sometimes appearing white, but other times taking on a pinkish hue. It is well worth a walk around, but be sure to take a look at it from the Bridge of Sighs, which provides the best view of the palace. Be prepared, however, to battle dozens of fellow tourists attempting to do the same.

Also built in the 9th century, St Mark's Basilica houses the remains of St Mark the Evangelist. The city cathedral was built in the Byzantine style and has a staggering 8,000 square metres (86,000 square feet) of mosaic covering the walls and vaults. A visit to the Basilica is a must for your itinerary, as is a trip to the top of the 99-metre (323-feet) tall Campanile for incredible views of Venice.

The square was built at the same time as the Basilica, and was enlarged in the 12th century – rapidly developing into the heart of the city. The square is the biggest open space in Venice, and can be a welcome relief to the at-times claustrophobic nature of the canal city. It may be a tad expensive, but there are few better places in the world to kick back with a proper Italian-style coffee than at one of the cafés surrounding the square.

TOP TIP

Because of its popularity, Venice can get very crowded, especially in the summer so try to wake up early to see the sights at their best.

Two of Venice's iconic landmarks – St Mark's Basilica and Doge's Palace

To see the Bridge of Sighs from the inside, book a Doge's Palace tour

Not many houses in the world have a watery back garden that is also a major highway

VENICE CARNIVAL

Although Venice is at its most visually stunning in the summer, February to March is carnival season. The carnival takes place in the build up to Lent, meaning that the city is crammed with delicious food and drink to be consumed before the start of the fast. The carnival kicks off with the Flight of the Angel - as the previous year's Mary Carnival winner 'flies' across St Mark's Square. The Venetians really know how to celebrate, with traditional masked galas, parades and regattas along the canals. Venice celebrates its history and heritage in spectacular style, with masquerade balls providing a throwback to the time masks were banned in Venice. The entire city comes out to celebrate and it can be pretty full, but it's an incredible experience not to be missed.

Images Getty Images

> “
> IS A TRIP TO VENICE TRULY COMPLETE WITHOUT A RIDE ON A GONDOLA?

You’ll appreciate having a rest, because there are so many glorious sights to see around the city, and there are no roads or cars in Venice. There are three ways to get around: on foot, via a water bus or on a gondola. The city is incredibly easy to walk around – you could get around the entire city in about half an hour if you got a good stride on. Make sure you have a detailed map if you’re walking Venice without a guide, as the 2,650 alleys can get quite boggling! Other than the footbridges, the water bus (or vaporetto) is the best way to cross the canals or travel through the city if you’re getting a bit tired or need to go somewhere quickly. These aren’t particularly cheap, but they are regular and it’s a lovely way to cruise a Venetian canal if you don’t fancy shelling out for a gondola.

Having said that, is a trip to Venice truly complete without a ride on a gondola? These long, narrow boats are synonymous with the city, and provide a romantic, fun way to spend 40 minutes, guided and possibly serenaded by a local expert. There are just 400 licensed gondoliers in Venice, and only two or three licences are given out per year after a rigorous exam process, so you know you are getting the very best that Venice has to offer. It’s a beautiful, unique way to see a city, and an ideal way to have a break from the hustle and bustle of the streets.

The city is a work of art in itself, but if you are in the mood for even more, the Peggy Guggenheim Museum should be an essential part of your trip. Situated in Guggenheim’s old house, there are dozens of pieces of Italian and American artwork, as well as new exhibits that have earned this museum global accolades. And if you think you recognise the name, Peggy Guggenheim is the niece of Solomon Guggenheim, who gave his name to the equally famous art gallery in New York.

Image Getty Images

THE RIALTO BRIDGE

Cross an iconic monument that connects Italy’s floating city

Venice’s Rialto Bridge is an engineering marvel set in Italy’s famous maritime city. Architect and engineer Antonio da Ponte reputedly ran against Michelangelo and renowned architect Andrea Palladio in a contest to rebuild it. His winning design was seen as audacious at the time, with some critics doubting its stability.

Nowadays, the beautiful 16th-century structure is still holding up and is packed with window-shopping crowds, with the souvenir and jewellery stores designed to help pay for the bridge’s upkeep.

By evening, the Rialto’s a great spot for views of the Grand Canal, meandering away towards the Dorsoduro area and the Giudecca on one side, and Santa Croce and Cannaregio on the other. Watching gondoliers skilfully manoeuvre their passengers around oncoming motorboats to the backdrop of Venice’s grand but slightly faded townhouses is a lowkey but satisfying way to while away the time.

The Rialto looks spectacular in the distance, too, the distinctive white limestone rising out over the canal’s narrowest point to connect two of Venice’s districts (San Marco and San Polo). If you look closely, you’ll spot elaborate carvings of San Marco, San Teodoro and the Angel Gabriel. The Rialto is also nearby to San Giacomo di Rialto, the city’s oldest church, said to have been consecrated in 421.

The bridge is made from a single stone arch supported by logs hammered into the ground. Da Ponte’s version replaced the wooden pontoon bridge as a main crossing point over the Grand Canal and provided easy access to the city’s financial centre. More convenient than a gondola, even if at 250,000 gold ducats it did cost a pretty penny and doesn’t look like much when held up against modern marvels like the Çanakkale suspension bridge in Turkey (the world’s longest at 4,608 metres (15,118 feet)).

Once you’ve admired the Rialto, head to the nearby Rialto Market to see the Venetian catch of the day in all its glory: octopus, squid, gamberi, and fish of all shapes and sizes. It’s packed with stalls selling fresh fruit and veg. If you’re after lunch to take away, then it’s worth talking to the stallholders, as they’ll be happy to help you put together a picnic. There are food tours and cooking classes you can arrange in advance via agencies such as tastevenice.it.

Restaurants around the Rialto tend to be touristy. Instead, head to Acqua e Mais, a street-food spot where you can grab a cone of fresh squid, shrimp and sardines, or some grilled cuttlefish and potato croquettes. Sepa is a quality osteria with a selection of seafood, risotto and local wines and beers. OLI RAHMAN

BOLOGNA

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD! IN A COUNTRY THAT IS FAMED FOR ITS GASTRONOMY, BOLOGNA IS THE CHERRY ON THE CAKE

Bologna's skyline punctuated by the two towers Asinelli and Garisenda

Bologna is less touristy than other Italian cities and that is one of its strengths as a destination. For a start, you don't have the pressure of world-famous sights to distract you from relaxing and drinking in the beauty of Italy and secondly, it is renowned for its food.

Bologna was awash with towers in times gone by, partly as military defence but also because they were seen as boasting rights in certain social circles. Two towers remain as symbols of the city – the Torre Degli Asinelli and the Torre Garisenda – but twins they are not. Asinelli is just over twice the height of Garisenda, although the latter claims the greater lean. If you're feeling energetic, it's a great idea to scale the 498 steps of Asinelli and gaze out on the roofs of the city, letting the food smells waft up into your nostrils.

We'll get to food in a moment, but let's cover the history and architecture first. Piazza Maggiore is, as the name suggests, the main square and it's got that higgledy-piggledy charm; a beautiful mish-mash of red-brick Tuscan arches, porticoes and marble-fronted buildings, all of different dimensions and eras.

It's packed with important buildings including the Palazzo d'Accursio, the Palazzo del Podesta, the Basilica di San Petronio and the Palazzo Comunale. The gothic Basilica, which dates from the late 14th century, has an unfinished part-marble façade and neighbouring Piazza del Nettuno hosts the Fountain of Neptune. You'll want to visit Archiginnasio, once a part of the University of Bologna and home to the Anatomical Theatre. The ancient wooden room has seating circling an ornate anatomical table, which is where medical students would have watched live surgery and dissections as part of their course.

Bologna is also famous for its portico – partially enclosed walkways lined with arches and columns. In fact, it boasts 40 kilometres (25 miles) of UNESCO-listed beauties including the longest in the world, which leads to the top of Monte della Guardia. It's a great walk and the tree-studded hill provides a nice spot for a shady picnic and views of the city.

Talking of picnics… it's time to talk tuck. Your trip to Bologna should centre around food; it's no accident that the city is nicknamed La Grassa – or The Fat One. Not only do you have markets like Mercato delle Erbe, Mercato di Mezzo and the old market in Quadrilatero to wander and discover, you also have shops like Atti & Figli bakery and Tamburini to peruse. Tamburini makes the local speciality, tortellini, a ring-shaped pasta filled with all sorts from cheese to veg to meat and served in a broth. For us, strolling the ancient streets and meeting the Italian producers, chefs and servers is what it's about but if you prefer a more modern approach, you could take a bus from the centre and visit FICO Eataly World. Some call it a food theme park but it's more of a centre designed to educate and inform visitors about Italian gastronomy – all under one roof. RACHEL IFANS

TOP TIP

Bologna is the birthplace of Bolognese or tagliatelle al ragu. Book a food tour to try it or find a restaurant just off the Piazza Maggiore.

Image Getty Images

PISA

THIS ANCIENT CITY HAS A LOT TO OFFER FOR HISTORY AND ART LOVERS

WORDS **EMILY STANIFORTH**

The city of Pisa is most well known for one thing: the renowned Leaning Tower. Snapping a photo in front of the iconic landmark is a must for visitors but it is by no means the only thing for tourists to do in this remarkable ancient city. Often skipped by visitors, but easy to find as they are situated right next to the Leaning Tower, are Pisa's spectacular cathedral and baptistery. Heading inside either of these medieval buildings provides an opportunity to soak up some of the finest art and architecture in the city, with both buildings featuring magnificent designs inside and out.

With archaeologists having found evidence that Pisa may have existed from as early as the Etruscan period, the city is rich with history. A stroll past Pisa's impressive medieval walls helps visitors to understand the city's past, as well as exploring the large number of churches that are dotted around the area. If the cathedral doesn't take your fancy, head for a passeggiata down by the river Arno and look out for Santa Maria della Spina – a small, richly adorned Gothic-style church dating from the 13th century.

One of Pisa's greatest institutions is its university which, having been founded in 1343, is one of the oldest universities in Europe and was once attended by the famous Pisan scientist Galileo. Tourists can

It takes a typical visitor around 20 minutes to climb to the top of the Leaning Tower

TOP TIP

The petite size of Pisa makes it the perfect city to explore on foot; pack comfortable shoes for navigating its cobblestone streets.

A walk along the River Arno takes you past the beautiful Santa Maria della Spina

Pisa's cathedral is often overshadowed by the fame of the nearby Leaning Tower

enjoy the university's facilities by paying a visit to their famous botanical gardens, and the accompanying gallery, to take in the splendour and stillness of this natural utopia in the heart of the city.

While art lovers may be forgiven for choosing cities like Rome and Florence to fulfil their interests, Pisa also offers a wealth of galleries and museums. Of these, one of the most significant is the gallery inside the Palazzo Blu, a former palace in Pisa's centre. The Palazzo hosts a number of temporary exhibitions during the year, but is also home to permanent exhibitions showcasing brilliant works of art as well as information on the city's history. And for those visitors wanting to find art around the city, the vibrant Tuttomondo mural by American artist Keith Haring can be found on the rear wall of the Sant'Antonio Abate church.

THE LEANING TOWER

See the world from a different angle atop Italy's famous tilting tower

If it wasn't for the ground shifting, the freestanding bell tower of the Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary in Pisa would barely get a second glance, so stuffed is this part of Italy with historic art and architecture. Unfortunately for the builders – but thankfully for the Pisan tourist industry – the tower soon started to tilt.

The result is the world's most famous building faux pas – a structure that leans almost four degrees from vertical. The 12th-century builders quickly realised that things were going awry – the foundations simply were not deep enough for the weak and unstable ground – and temporarily paused construction at the second floor for almost a century when the slant first began to show. When building resumed, the upper floors were built with a slight curve to try to compensate for the offset angle. The bell chamber was finally added in 1372, 199 years after the dodgy foundations were dug.

Visitors to the Piazza dei Miracoli should ensure they have a timed entry ticket for the tower; they can be bought online in advance or on the day. No need to worry if you have a bit of a wait – there is plenty to do before you enter. Throngs of tourists line the square trying to find the perfect angle for the ubiquitous photo of them holding up the tower. If that's a little too twee for your taste, head into the cathedral to admire the Romanesque architecture or explore the great domed baptistery, which itself leans 0.6 degrees. Every half an hour, a steward sings a few notes to demonstrate its stunning acoustic echo.

When it's time to climb the tower, prepare for a slog up 273 steps, although there are plenty of landings to pause and rest. The interior of the tower is largely hollow and many people perceive the lean to be greater from the inside than the outside. Most of the smooth, stone, spiral staircase has no handrail, so wary sightseers often try to grip the wall as they go – particularly when they pass visitors going in the opposite direction. Those descending have right of way, although few people on the upward journey complain about the enforced rest!

The seventh floor offers the best opportunity to walk outside. A gap between the wall and columns circles the tower, and metal grilles prevent anybody trying to replicate Galileo, who dropped two cannonballs from the tower in around 1590 to measure how quickly they fell. Don't forget your camera – it's pretty much the only thing you're allowed to bring inside anyway, since bags must be left at the ticket office – to capture spectacular views of the cathedral and the red-tile roofs across the rest of the city.

Images Alamy, Getty Images

FLORENCE

A SHRINE TO THE RENAISSANCE ERA, THIS CITY IS BRIMMING WITH ART AND CULTURE

This historic Italian city, nestled in the Tuscany region, is as beautiful as it is fascinating. For starters, Florence is one of the few cities on the globe with a historical centre listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its invaluable contributions to art, history and culture. Here, art lovers and history geeks alike will find plenty to entertain them.

At the centre of the city is the Piazza della Signoria. The most famous square in Florence, it is considered the political heart of the locality. Its government operates from the neighbouring town hall, the Palazzo Vecchio. The square itself has played a vital role in many important historical moments such as the Bonfire of the Vanities in 1497, when supporters of Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola collected and tossed thousands of objects such as cosmetics, art and books that were purported to tempt sin into a large fire pit constructed in the square.

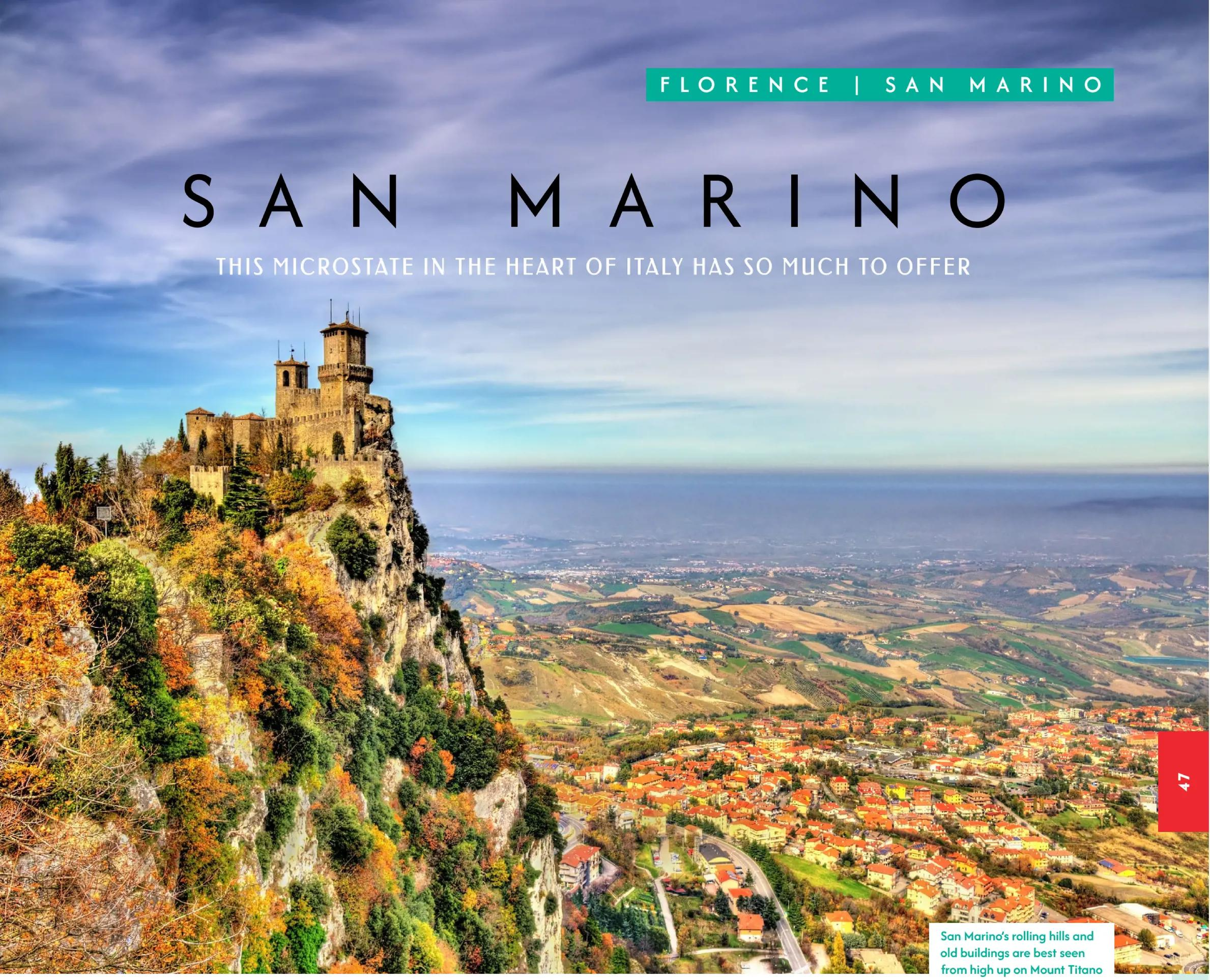
Much like the history of Florence, the art it displays is famous across the globe. Inside the Uffizi Gallery, which is just minutes from the square, is a rare gem of 15th-century Renaissance art and one of Botticelli's finest pieces: *The Birth of Venus*. Approximately two kilometres (1.2 miles) away, inside the Galleria dell'Accademia, visitors can gaze upon Michelangelo's famous *David* statue, which he carved from a single block of marble in the early 16th century at the age of just 26.

Around 450 metres (1,476 feet) from the gallery, situated at the centre of the city's main market district, you will find the church of San Lorenzo, one of Florence's biggest churches and said to have been consecrated by St Ambrose on Easter Day, 393 CE. This impressive monument also contains the Medici Chapel, the famous mausoleum of the Medici family – the most powerful and influential family in Florence between the 15th and 18th centuries.

One of the greatest masterpieces of Gothic architecture to be found in Florence is the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore. This Florentine cathedral is one of the largest churches in Christianity and was a symbol of wealth and power in the city during the 13th and 14th centuries as it was the largest cathedral in Europe, with a capacity for 30,000 people. The 463 steps up the cathedral offer the best view of the city. From the top, you'll be able to take in the wondrous sight of the city, while the adjacent Giotto's Campanile (bell tower) allows for a view of Florence's famous Duomo, which is largely responsible for the iconic silhouette of the Florence skyline. TANITA MATTHEWS

Surrounded by the idyllic Tuscan hills and bisected by the beautiful Arno River, Florence's Renaissance landscape has remained unchanged for centuries

Image Getty Images



SAN MARINO

THIS MICROSTATE IN THE HEART OF ITALY HAS SO MUCH TO OFFER

San Marino's rolling hills and old buildings are best seen from high up on Mount Titano

Football fans know San Marino as the country that gets thrashed regularly. Trivia fans know it as the fifth-smallest country in the world. But San Marino is much more than that, as this 60-square-kilometre (23-square-mile) microstate packs an astonishing amount into an area smaller than Leicester. It is entirely enclosed within Italy and often neglected due to its small size and proximity to the more glamorous areas of Bologna and Florence. However, that is a huge mistake given there is so much to do inside the world's oldest republic.

San Marino is a bygone relic of the old city-state system, when Italians were more commonly known as the Romans, Genoese or Venetians. The City of San Marino, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, sits in the dramatic shadow of Mount Titano, which rises 762 metres (2,500 feet) above the town. Walk or drive up the mountain to see the picture-perfect Three Towers of San Marino at the summit: Guaita, Cesta and Montale. These ancient guard posts date back to the 10th century, and you can enjoy spectacular views from Guaita and Cesta that stretch over the entire, beautiful country.

The stunning neoclassical San Marino Basilica, a neo-classical mid-19th-century Catholic church, houses the remains of the chapel's founder, Saint Marinus, after whom the country is named. From there, it's a short walk to the Palazzo Pubblico, or Public Palace. This is the seat of San Marino's government, adorned with spectacular murals. There's a quirky clock tower, which you can admire from the laid-back setting of the piazza. The stone for the Palazzo Pubblico, which was restored in the late 19th century, was quarried just a stone's throw away. The quarry is now a huge tourist attraction in itself, as it is the location for the annual crossbow competition as well as the city's medieval festival.

This odd country is also home to a number of unique museums, from the Vampire Museum to the Museum of Agricultural Culture, where you can take a cooking course in one of the oldest farmhouses in the country. And with the gastronomic regions of Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany not far away, you can be assured the cooking in San Marino is of the highest quality.

Perhaps the greatest thing about San Marino is that you can enjoy all the delights of Italy for a lower price than you would in Italy itself. And with all its own merits, it seems incredible that San Marino is such an overlooked destination for travellers who enjoy its culture, history and culinary delights.

JAMIE FRIER

TOP TIP

There is no border control, but you do need to carry a valid passport. You can also buy a souvenir passport stamp at the tourist office.

Image Getty Images

The Roman Forum was once the beating heart of the city

ROME

IF YOU WANT BOTH ANCIENT AND MODERN, THE ETERNAL CITY IS EVERYTHING YOU NEED

WORDS KATE MARSH

Image Getty Images

TOP TIP

Do your research when buying tickets for the Colosseum, Roman Forum and Palatine Hill to make sure you see everything you want to.

It doesn't matter what you're after – Rome will probably have it. From ancient Roman ruins to incredible Italian pizza, it's a city that's got everything covered. It's impossible to be short of things to do and sights to see – your main problem will be trying to fit everything in!

The best place to start is probably at the beginning and what Rome is most famous for: the Roman Empire. Everywhere you go, there are reminders of what has come before you and the civilisation that once ruled the Mediterranean. First and foremost there's the Colosseum, the structure that witnessed gladiators fight each other to death, but that's not all. Nearby, you can see what remains of the Circus Maximus, the stadium used for ancient chariot races, as well as the Forum, where Romans shopped and conducted business. You can even take a walk up the Palatine Hill, one of the Seven Hills of Rome. It's here that you can see the famed Arches of Titus and Constantine. Just a few hundred metres away you'll also be able to explore the ruins of the Domus Aurea, or Gold House, a building that was started by nefarious emperor Nero in a bid to display his grand power and vast wealth.

If you want to see a feat of Roman engineering, take a visit to the Pantheon, which dates back to around 113 CE. Although no one knows what the Romans used it for, it has now found purpose as a church. When you visit it, make sure you look up at the magnificent domed ceiling made of thousands of tons of concrete that have been held up for almost 2,000 years.

Take a ten-minute walk from the Pantheon through Rome's bustling streets filled with traditional Italian buildings, and you will find yourself in front of one of the most famous attractions the city has to offer: the Trevi Fountain. At 26 metres (86 feet) high and 49 metres (161 feet) wide, the Baroque

No trip to Rome is complete without some time gaping at the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel

VATICAN CITY

The heart of the Catholic world, Vatican City is not to be missed. A tiny city-state within the heart of Rome, it's the only place in the world where you'll find ATMs that you can read in Latin – but it's also home to so much more.

Covering less than half of a square kilometre (less than a quarter of a square mile), it's the epicentre of Roman Catholicism and the site of the infamous St Peter's Basilica. A stunning piece of Italian Renaissance architecture, check it out before heading to the Vatican Museums, which contain paintings, sculptures and other works of art that have been collected by popes through the centuries.

While you wait in ticket queues in St Peter's Square, be sure to take in the beauty of your surroundings. The piazza is unabashedly opulent with a 25-metre (84-feet) tall red granite obelisk in the centre, which had originally been erected in Egypt by an ancient pharaoh. Even if you don't go into any of the museums, it's definitely worth a trip just to see this grand sight.

Visit the 17th-century oasis for its beautiful gardens and incredible art collection

fountain is a sight to behold. Having featured in celebrated films such as *Roman Holiday* and *La Dolce Vita*, today it's also associated with making wishes. Tradition dictates that if you throw a coin over your left shoulder with your right hand, your wish will come true, and people believe it – it's estimated that 3,000 euros are thrown into the fountain each day. Of course, the money has to go somewhere – in this case, it's used to subsidise a supermarket for Rome's homeless population.

The Piazza di Trevi isn't Rome's only famous square – the city is littered with them. One you may have heard of is the Piazza di Spagna, or Spain Square, home to the Spanish Steps that were first opened in 1725. Made famous by featuring in films like *Roman Holiday* and F Scott Fitzgerald's novel *Tender Is the Night*, the steps are also decorated at certain times of the year. At Christmas, a crib scene is placed at the first landing, and in early spring, parts of the steps are covered in potted azaleas.

> “
> FROM ANCIENT ROMAN RUINS TO INCREDIBLE PIZZA, ROME HAS IT ALL

Right at the top of the Spanish Steps, you can find another of Rome's highlights. The Villa Medici is currently home to the Academy of France in Rome, but tours are available from Tuesday to Sunday in English, Italian, French, Spanish and Russian. You can see magnificent sculptures, and uncover the villa's history before ending your visit at the belvedere, which boasts a stunning panoramic view of the Eternal City.

Behind the Villa Medici are the expansive gardens of the Villa Borghese, and if you're looking to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city for a while, this is the place you need to go. You can sit by the lake or take

ST PETER'S BASILICA

The Vatican's St Peter's Basilica is an enduring symbol of the Catholic Church

Designed by Michelangelo, the Basilica's dome took 800 men 22 months to complete

A short walk from the Vatican Museums and Sistine Chapel, and a brief bus, taxi, Metro or tram ride from Rome, St Peter's Basilica offers a glimpse into the very heart of the Catholic Church.

After soaking in cathedral's storied corners, visitors can travel up an increasingly narrow series of spiral staircases, into Michelangelo's dome, opening out to a dizzying view of the basilica below. Although an elevator is on hand for these first 320 steps, more ambitious explorers can traverse another 231 to the top of the cupola, with staggering panoramic views overlooking Vatican City and Rome beyond.

The basilica can be traced back to a 4th-century structure built by Emperor Constantine over the tomb of St Peter – the first Bishop of Rome, believed to have perished under Nero's violent persecution of the emerging faith following the Great Fire of 64.

By 1500, however, the site had been devastated by a long string of sackings and calamities – prompting the Pope to commission an even more remarkable structure. Launched under the direction of famed master architect Donato Bramante, the project tore down the walls of the old building and laid a new foundation stone in 1506. Centring his design on a Greek Cross formation, Bramante wasted no time in excavating and erecting four structural piers, to hold up an enormous dome.

After Bramante's death, construction continued piecemeal under various popes and architects. Michelangelo was already in his seventies when he reluctantly agreed to take charge of the project “without pay and without reward” – bringing some desperately needed focus and vigour for almost two decades. He designed its crowning dome, rising like a crown over the tomb of St Peter, which took 800 men around 22 months to complete.

While the 137-metre (450-feet) high dome was finally completed in 1590 by Giacomo Della Porta, it was Carlo Maderno who constructed the façade – ripping down the front wall and lengthening its eastern end, to transform it into a Latin Cross.

After more than a century of work, the basilica was finally completed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who added its double colonnade – symbolising the church's two long arms, embracing Catholics, 'heretics' and 'infidels' alike. Within, directly beneath Michelangelo's dome, perched atop the marble Altar of the Confession, Bernini forged the bronze baldachin.

Bernini also completed the striking ellipse-shaped St Peter's Square, stretching 320 metres (1,050 feet) long and 240 metres (787 feet) wide – where revellers still amass every Sunday to hear the Pope recite prayers from a window, and receive the Apostolic Blessing. At its centre is a 25-metre (82-feet) tall obelisk, towering over an eight-metre (26-feet) wide base – which was hewn from a single block in ancient Egypt and hauled to Rome's circus by Caligula in 37 CE. Moving it to St Peter's Square required 900 men, 140 horses and 44 winches.

More than 1,300 years after its earliest incarnation, the building was consecrated in 1626. It has had a huge impact on architecture and art, with masters travelling from across the world to study it. Still the world's largest church, capable of hosting around 20,000 worshippers inside and 80,000 in the square, it is one of Christendom's most celebrated pilgrimage sites.

Images Getty Images

in the 18th-century ‘temples’ around the park, like that of Asclepius and Diana. If you delve deeper, you’ll also find a replica of Shakespeare’s Globe and the Borghese Gallery and Museum, in which you can see original artworks by Bernini and Caravaggio. In the northwest corner of the park you’ll also come across Rome’s zoo.

To the south of the park is the Piazza del Popolo, where you’ll find an obelisk dedicated to Ramesses II. Here you’ll also find Santa Maria del Popolo, a basilica that has two stunning canvases by Caravaggio and magnificent Renaissance decorations inside. If you head along the Tiber just a little further south, you’ll find yourself at the ruins of the Mausoleum of Augustus, the resting place of the first Roman emperor. While it’s currently not much to look at and under renovation, it is an important part of Rome’s history.

A quick walk across the river will find you at the Mausoleum of Hadrian, more

> “
> AT 26M (86FT) HIGH THE BAROQUE FOUNTAIN IS A SIGHT TO BEHOLD

CLEMENS XII PONT MAX
AQVAM VIRGINEM
COPIA ET SALVBRITATE COMMENDATAM
CVLTV MAGNIFICO ORNAVIT
ANNO DOMINI MDCCXXXV PONTIF VI
PERFECIT BENEDICTVS XIV PON MAX

THE TREVI FOUNTAIN

See the grandiose waterworks that grace the heart of Italy

Stand with your back to the fountain and throw a coin over your left shoulder. The first coin ensures you will return to Rome. The second helps you find your love. And the third means you will marry (or perhaps divorce, if that’s your wish). As Roman traditions go, this is a newbie. It’s nothing to do with the ancient rituals of the Caesars or the rebirth of the city in the Renaissance – the three-coins-in-the fountain trick derives from a 1954 film with a soundtrack sung by Frank Sinatra. Still, that doesn’t stop more than €3,000 a day being deposited in the Trevi Fountain by visitors re-creating the film. The money is given to charitable causes.

Whether you join the masses tossing money or not, the Trevi Fountain is a worthy addition to the itinerary on any visit to the Eternal City. Named after its location at the junction of three roads (tre vie), the fountain was once a functional watering point fed by an aqueduct that collected water ten kilometres (six miles) outside the city. Pope Clement XII wanted something a little grander to sit in front of the Palazzo Poli and organised a competition to design a new fountain. Although Florentine Alessandro Galilei was judged the winner, regional politics meant the commission was given to local boy Nicola Salvi and construction began in 1732.

Galilei’s loss was Rome’s gain as Salvi set about bringing his design to life. A new façade of Corinthian columns was constructed for the Palazzo Poli and the fountain was backed up against it. Underneath the arch at the centre of the façade, Salvi envisioned the sea god Neptune being pulled to the sea on a shell-shaped chariot pulled by two winged horses led by young sea gods. Water spills from under Neptune’s shell, across rugged coastal stones into a pool. The stonework is stuffed with symbolism. One of the horses is calm, the other rears up, representing the changing tides of the sea. Two statues stand in niches to Neptune’s side and signify the gifts that water brings to the city: Abundance (on the left) and Health (on the right).

Once complete, the fountain was a colossal 26 metres (85 feet) tall. It pumped millions of gallons of water every day and provided clean drinking water for residents. Now there is a closed system with recirculating pumps so wastage is minimal, but it’s no longer drinkable.

Unfortunately, Salvi did not live to see his majestic late-Baroque fountain completed, nor did Clement XII, but their successors Giuseppe Pannini and Clement XIII were present for the fountain’s official unveiling in 1762. Since then, millions of visitors to the capital have come to stand in awe at the giant fountain. To enjoy the fountain without the crowds, visit first thing or late at night. There are plenty of restaurants and bars nearby for a morning cappuccino or a late-night grappa.

commonly known today as Castel Sant'Angelo, which is home to the remains of another great Roman emperor. However, that's not all the history this building has seen. At the beginning of the 14th century, the Catholic Church began to use it as a castle, connecting it to the nearby St Peter's Basilica in what is now Vatican City, and it was a major stronghold in the Sack of Rome of 1527. It has also been used as a prison, before finally becoming a museum, which is its role today.

Head west along Via dei Corridori or Via della Conciliazione and you'll find something incredibly unique to the city of Rome – a microstate. The powerhouse of Roman Catholicism, Vatican City was made its own country in 1929, and is home to St Peter's

The Trevi Fountain is constructed from the same travertine limestone used to build the Colosseum

THE COLOSSEUM

An enduring symbol of Rome's majesty, Italy's Colosseum is one of the world's great ancient relics

The Colosseum could hold up to 50,000 spectators, each seated according to class

Today Italy's Flavian Amphitheatre, better known as the Colosseum, serves as a piece of living history, but there was a time when it was once a factory of death, a place where citizens of all backgrounds flocked to watch gladiators battle to the death, criminals endure elaborate executions, and Christians torn apart by lions. Built under the reign of Emperor Vespasian, the amphitheatre stretched 189 by 156 metres (620 by 513 feet), and rising four storeys high, the Colosseum could hold 50,000 spectators. The façade boasted an array of arches, accentuated by different types of semi-circular columns – Tuscan on the ground floor, then Ionic and finally Corinthian, with the fourth blind storey dressed with pilasters, adorned with Corinthian capitals. At the top of the façade were gilded bronze shields, while the arches beneath featured painted statues of emperors and gods.

Although Romans from all walks of life could attend, they were segregated through a series of 76 entrances, into seating divided by class. The best seats were the lowest ones, atop or just behind the podium. The seating on this floor was made of marble, or travertine – the same material as the external walls – with walls of polished marble slabs and stucco complete with elaborate paintings. After the first three rows, spectators were packed very tightly together.

The largest amphitheatre ever built, the Colosseum's arena was covered in 51 centimetres (21 inches) of sand – sometimes dyed red to hide the blood. It featured trap doors, to allow for dramatic surprise animal attacks, and was occasionally decorated for more spectacular re-enactments of mythical demises. Vespasian's son and successor, Titus, inaugurated the arena in 80 CE with 100 days of gladiatorial games – including a sea fight, where the arena was flooded with one metre (3 feet) of water.

After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the Colosseum was ravaged by successive pillaging, earthquakes and fires. Later, it was used as a quarrying site for materials for the construction of the cathedrals of St Peter and St John Lateran, the Palazzo Venezia and the Tiber's river defences. By the 20th century, almost two thirds of the original structure had been destroyed – before restoration work began.

Today, thanks to an ongoing restoration project, it stands as one of the most iconic heirlooms of ancient Rome and a testament to the might and majesty of the city, with millions of visitors flocking to it every year.

After admiring the landmark from the outside, the best way to enter the Colosseum is through the Via Dei Fori Imperiali, as this street offers spectacular views of the structure's best-preserved façade. A basic adult ticket will grant access to the first and second floors, but guided tours include other levels. All tickets enable access to the Roman Forum and Palatine Hill, which are worth visiting while you're there. Book your ticket online to avoid queueing, and give yourself an hour or two to explore the Colosseum.

Images Getty Images, Alamy

The Spanish Steps are a famous landmark and attraction of Rome and Italy

The castle of Sant'Angelo, as seen from the bridge of the same name

Basilica, the residence of the Pope and the infamous Sistine Chapel. The pictures that you often see really don't do the frescoes justice – you have to see them to truly understand the size of them and get a feel for their vibrant colours, as they tell the stories of the Bible larger than life on the walls. And while you are there, make sure you look up at the ceiling to see Michelangelo's *The Last Judgement* in all of its splendour and glory.

Just in case you're looking for something a little darker on your holiday, Rome's got you covered. If you head northeast out of the city centre on Via Salaria, you'll find yourself at the Catacombs of Priscilla, a series of underground tombs that you can explore with a guide to understand the early days of Christianity in what is now considered one of the most Catholic cities in the world. There's no need to worry about seeing any bodies, though, as any that were there have been moved out by archaeologists; the tour focuses more on ancient religion and burial. You'll also have a chance to see what is the oldest known image in existence of the Virgin Mary. Not bad for an afternoon trip.

Sports fans need not be left out of what Rome has to offer – the city has two national stadiums relatively close to each other in Quartiere I Flaminio and across the river in Quartiere XV Della Vittoria. In the former, you'll find the Stadio Flaminio, the current home of Italy's rugby team. The latter is home to the Stadio Olimpico, the largest sports stadium in all of Italy, which is used primarily for football.

Those wanting to see all that Rome has to offer in a short, accessible trip can check out one of the many tours available. Some show you the main attractions in a day, while others give commentary as you walk around specific areas. As with most European cities, there's also a hop-on, hop-off bus that can give you the lie of the land before you embark on your own adventures, and you can use your bus pass to get you from place to place for as long

Piazza Navona is a vibrant square – perfect for a pizza and some people-watching

as your ticket lasts. For a different view of the city, you can even go on a boat tour that will take you up and down the Tiber, pointing out the interesting places to visit on each side of Rome's historic river.

If you want something a little more special, many companies also offer night tours on foot or coach so that you have the chance to see the city illuminated with dramatic lighting against the night sky. You can even explore the Colosseum by night on a 2.5-hour tour that takes you all around the site – even to the underground chambers and arena floor, which are off-limits to standard ticket holders.

You'll find many deals around the city offering cheaper ticket prices in separate passes, and it is definitely worth looking into these. The Roma Pass, for example, gives you free entrance to one or two archaeological sites, depending on which ticket you go for, as well as unlimited travel on the city's public transport (that's the Metro and buses) for the duration of your ticket. There's also the OMNIA card for Rome and the Vatican, which gives you fast-track entry to some attractions, free entry to some others, a free hop-on, hop-off bus tour for three days, discounted entry to even more sites, and free travel cards and guide books. Whichever option you go for, you'll be sure to find some great deals.

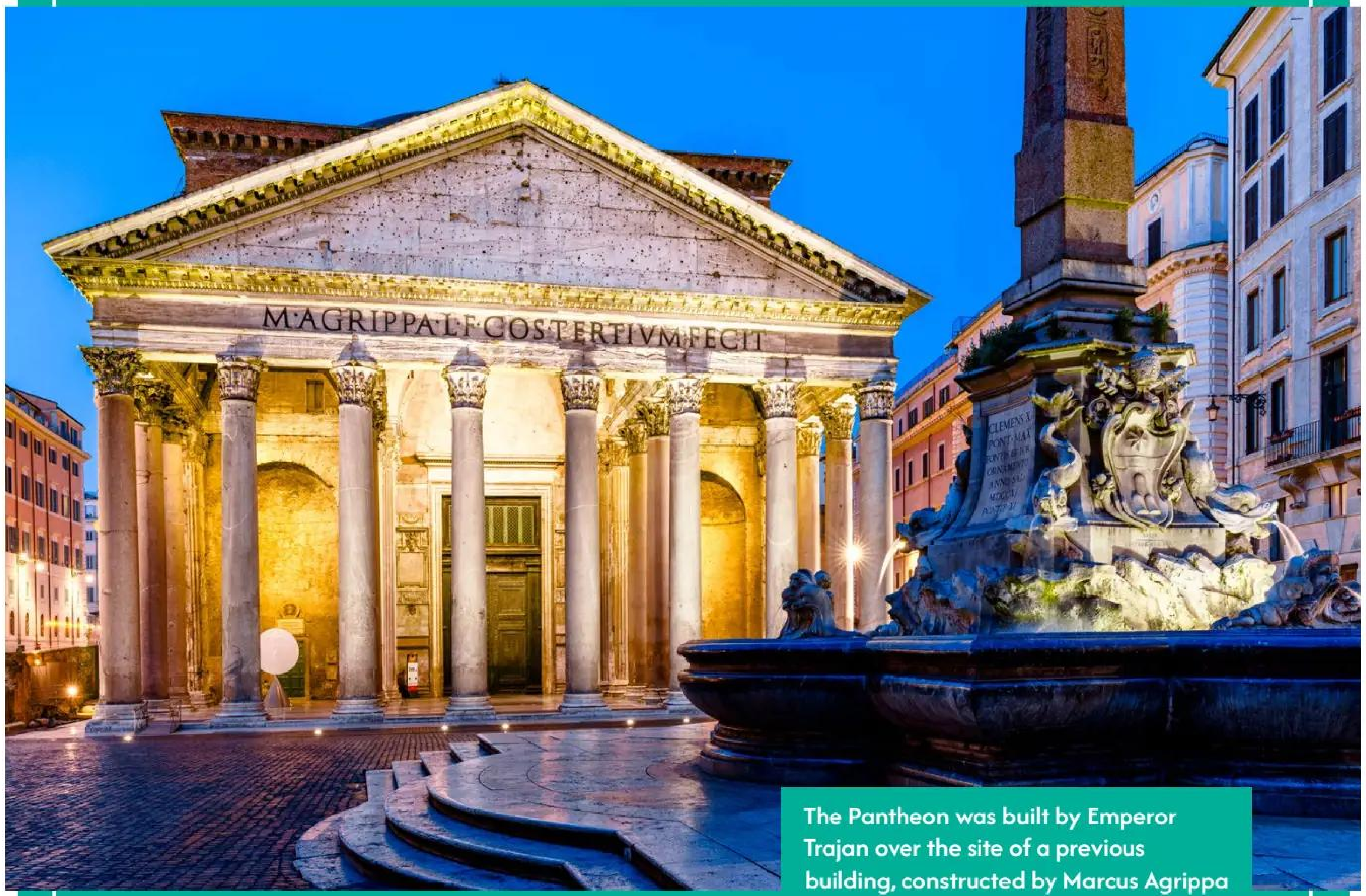
> "THE PICTURES THAT YOU OFTEN SEE REALLY DON'T DO THE FRESCOES JUSTICE

Of course, no holiday to Italy would be worth it without trying some of the local cuisine, and Rome is littered with restaurants and cafés offering pizza, pasta and deliciously creamy tiramisu. It is worth noting that tipping isn't necessarily a custom that's practised in Italy; you'll often find a service charge applied to your bill instead. But if you're looking for a quick bite and you don't have time to stop, what do you do? The answer is quite simple: find a street cart. Rome's street carts sell some of the most delicious pizza, for just a couple of euros, and you can eat it while hurrying off to your next attraction or while sitting in a peaceful park or bustling square.

If, somehow, you run out of things to do in Rome – which, let's face it, is highly unlikely – there are plenty of companies offering day trips to other famous places, such as the ancient ruins of Pompeii to the southeast and Florence to the northwest. But it's unlikely you'll want to leave the city centre – there's far too much to do.

THE PANTHEON

Thousands of years old, the Pantheon is the only temple still in its original state



The Pantheon was built by Emperor Trajan over the site of a previous building, constructed by Marcus Agrippa

One of the Roman Empire's most magnificent and best-preserved monuments, the Pantheon is a gateway to discovery, offering visitors a glimpse into thousands of years of history. Located in the beating heart of Rome, a short walk away from the River Tiber and the Via del Corso, the site is just a taxi, bus or tram ride from most of the centre's other cultural marvels.

Dominating the picturesque Piazza della Rotonda outside, adorned with a fountain and obelisk, the Pantheon's inner-bowels are a striking sight – best enjoyed with a guided tour, or audio-guide, for those who prefer to explore at their own pace.

The original Pantheon was constructed by the general Marcus Agrippa to commemorate Augustus's decisive victory over Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE. Built in the Campus Martius, the historic centre of Rome, Agrippa's Pantheon was initially believed to have been a conventional Hellenistic temple; small and rectangular, facing south.

Although the name implies it served as a temple to the pantheon of Roman gods, some believe it may have served as a dynastic sanctuary for the ruler cults of Augustus and Julius Caesar. A popular story also claims it was built on the site where Rome's mythological founder, Romulus, was raised to the heavens.

The building was devastated by a fire in around 80 CE, and somewhat restored by Emperor Domitian – only to be severely burned again under the rule of Trajan in 110. Trajan decided to rebuild the structure, a project that was continued by his successor Hadrian.

Drawing on sacred geometry, the dome's coffers were split into 28 sections, equalling the total number of large columns below. In Pythagorean mathematics, 28 was one of just four known 'perfect numbers' whose summed factors equal it (1+2+4+7+14=28) – a number holding special cosmological and religious symbolism. With light entering only through the spectacular oculus at the top of the dome, the building served as a metaphor for the Empire itself - divine light shining down through the heavens over the Roman world below under the auspices of the emperor.

Outside, 16 columns, each carved from a single block of Egyptian grey granite – remarkably sourced from the middle of the Egyptian desert – tower 12 metres (40 feet) high, supporting the porch.

As with many of Rome's most distinctive buildings, the Pantheon's distinctive walls were made from brick-faced concrete, with relieving arches and vaults built in, alcoves carved around the rotunda's perimeter, and a large apse carved opposite the entrance – where Hadrian held court. Although it was renovated by Caracalla and Septimius Severus, as Roman power shifted to the East, and towards Christianity, following the reign of Constantine, the Pantheon sadly fell into disrepair.

In the 7th century, having been pillaged by the Goths and flooded by the Tiber, the Pantheon was consecrated by the Pope – sparing it the destruction most of Rome's other landmarks faced, and it was preserved as Saint Mary of the Rotunda. A pair of bell towers were added to the building in the 1500s, to give it a more traditional church aesthetic, but they were dubbed the 'ass-ears of Bernini' – after a rumour that he had designed them – and were later removed. Today it is the only ancient Roman temple that visitors can explore in virtually its original state.

Images Getty Images

POMPEII

STEP BACK IN TIME IN ITALY TO THE HEIGHT OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Vesuvius still looms over the ruins, and you can climb it if you want to

If you've ever wanted to walk where the Romans have walked before you, Pompeii is the perfect place. Steeped in history and with a stunning view of an active volcano, there's nothing you won't enjoy.

As ruins go, the Bay of Naples is sublime. When Mount Vesuvius, the volcano that looms ominously over the area, erupted in 79 CE, the pyroclastic surge left behind perfectly preserved buildings, streets and even loaves of bread. Thanks to that, we know the layout of almost the entire city, and today we can walk around it. Visit the baths where the citizens would have washed themselves, take a trip to a bakery, and read the graffiti painted on the walls that has remained there for almost 2,000 years. You can even explore a typical Roman house, with what remains of beds, tables and dining couches. And, of course, no trip is complete without a visit to the Villa of the Mysteries where you can view an original Roman fresco in all its splendid glory.

It's the perfect day out for anyone interested in ancient history, and the site is close to local transport links. Perhaps the one drawback of Pompeii is that while it gives you the layout of a Roman town, it does lack two-storey buildings. However, this is where a neighbouring city comes in. Just a short journey away, Herculaneum, another town wiped out by the volcanic blast, sits, waiting to be explored. Although what's been excavated isn't as vast as the city of Pompeii, you can get a real sense of walking down a Roman street with homes where people lived and the reconstructed wooden balconies where neighbours would have conversed.

If after wandering the streets you want to see some artefacts, head to Naples, the sprawling city at the foot of Mount Vesuvius. There you'll find the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, which houses objects and mosaics found at Pompeii and Herculaneum, as well as other Roman finds from the region.

The real pièce de résistance, however, is the volcano itself. If you're up for a challenge, you can climb it. Vehicles can take you as far as 1,000 metres (3,280 feet) above sea level, but then you need to walk the last 200 metres (656 feet). However, it's not a race to the top – take your time. On a clear day, the panoramic view takes you from the city of Naples, across the blue water of the Bay of Naples to the gorgeous city of Sorrento and beyond it the island of Capri – both worth visiting. At the summit, you can peer into an active volcano – but don't worry, there are no hazardous fumes. It is worth noting, though, that Vesuvius will be dangerous when it erupts again. Its cycle is usually every 20 years, but it hasn't erupted since 1944. However, seismologists are closely monitoring it so it won't surprise anyone.

For Roman marvels, the Bay of Naples should be high on your list. With so much to do and see, you'll wonder why it took you so long. KATE MARSH

Image Getty Images

NAPLES

NAPLES IS EXCITING, EXOTIC AND MAKES THE HAIRS ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECK STAND ON END

Naples has a reputation for being busy, dirty and even a bit dangerous but in reality it's an intoxicating place to visit, with its melting pot of cultures, its loud and demonstrative people and its staggering history. There's so much to see and do that it's hard to cover it all in a weekend, but here are our essential highlights.

If you fly into the airport and screech into town in one of the breakneck-speed cabs, you might not know where's north, south, east or west. A good place to orient yourself is at the docks, where you can see across the Bay of Naples to Vesuvius, Sorrento and more, as well as Naples' Castel dell'Ovo, so named because, according to legend, Roman poet Virgil put an egg in its foundations. It's Naples' oldest fortification and has also been an island palace and prison over the centuries.

You need plenty of time to meander in the UNESCO-listed Centro Storico, the old part of the city. By day, explore the myriad ancient churches like the 15th-century Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo which, despite its austere façade, is decorated and beautiful inside. There's also Cappella Sansevero, renowned for its marble sculpture *The Veiled Christ*, and the Santa Chiara religious complex, of which the colourful cloister is a highlight.

In the early evening, the historical centre is atmospheric and far less intimidating than you may have been lead to believe. Make sure you wander the Spaccanapoli, one of the many narrow streets where the opposing balconies are so close you could step from one to the other, and go to Via San Gregorio, where artisan craftspeople make presipio (nativity scenes) and Christmas figurines in workshops.

Piazza Bellini is excellent for an apero; it's lined with artsy bars and stuffed with academics and bohemians after chit-chat, romance and shade from the day's heat. Many Neapolitan soirées feature a passeggiata, an after-dinner walk that includes socialising, gelato and the chance to parade a new family member/tech gadget/outfit. The Lungomare alongside the sea is a hotspot for locals and provides great opportunities for people-watching.

Naples' main museum, the National Archaeological Museum, rivals many capital cities for its historical importance, mainly because it's where they took all the best small-scale finds from Pompeii and Herculaneum. Don't miss the Farnese Marbles, Roman copies of classical Greek sculptures, as well as ancient Roman bronzes from the Villa of the Papyri.

And now to the food. In Naples, you're in the birthplace of pizza and as such it's become something of an art form to create the lightest base and airiest sides. Everywhere you look has a pizza restaurant and you'll be very unlucky if you come across a bad one, although you might be tempted into more leftfield menu choices like pizza fritta, a deep-fried variety. RACHEL IFANS

Image Getty Images

The Naples seafront and, in the distance, Vesuvius

SICILY

HERE'S EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VISITING ITALY'S SUNNY SOUTHERN ISLAND

WORDS **JULIA MITCHELL**

An autonomous area of Italy with its own regional government, Sicily is a stunning island with much for tourists to explore. From luxurious beaches and historical landmarks to bustling cities, cosy villages and an enormous volcano, it's a location that you will want to return to.

When looking at a map you'll find Sicily in the south of Italy, across from the toe of the country's iconic boot shape. Its capital city is Palermo, and much of the area is mountainous with several volcanoes including Mount Etna, which is one of the largest active volcanoes in Europe, and Stromboli in the Aeolian Islands just north of Sicily.

Sicily is renowned for its deliciously warm Mediterranean climate, and its mild winters make it the ideal location for a winter escape. The summers can be very warm in comparison, with temperatures easily extending past 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) during the height of the season. You may be surprised to know that despite the hot weather, Mount Etna is topped with snow suitable for snow sports between the months of December and February.

Sicily is a hotspot for ancient architectural ruins, and you'll find both Roman and Greek remains at various points around the island. The Valley of the Temples in Agrigento dates back to classical Greece, and is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site with eight separate temples to explore. Ancient Roman architecture can be observed at Villa Romana del Casale, which is located in Piazza Armerina, and contains wonderfully preserved Roman mosaics.

Watch a live theatre performance in Syracuse's ancient amphitheatre, and discover the ancient Greek ruins in Eraclea Minoa. Cultures collide in Lipari Archaelogical Museum, which is filled with artefacts that date all the way back to the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, as well as the Graeco-Roman era.

When you've finished sightseeing, head down to the island's extensive coastline and hop between exquisite beaches of all kinds –

Cefalu is a beautiful historical town with lovely beaches, a well-preserved Norman cathedral, and many shops and restaurants

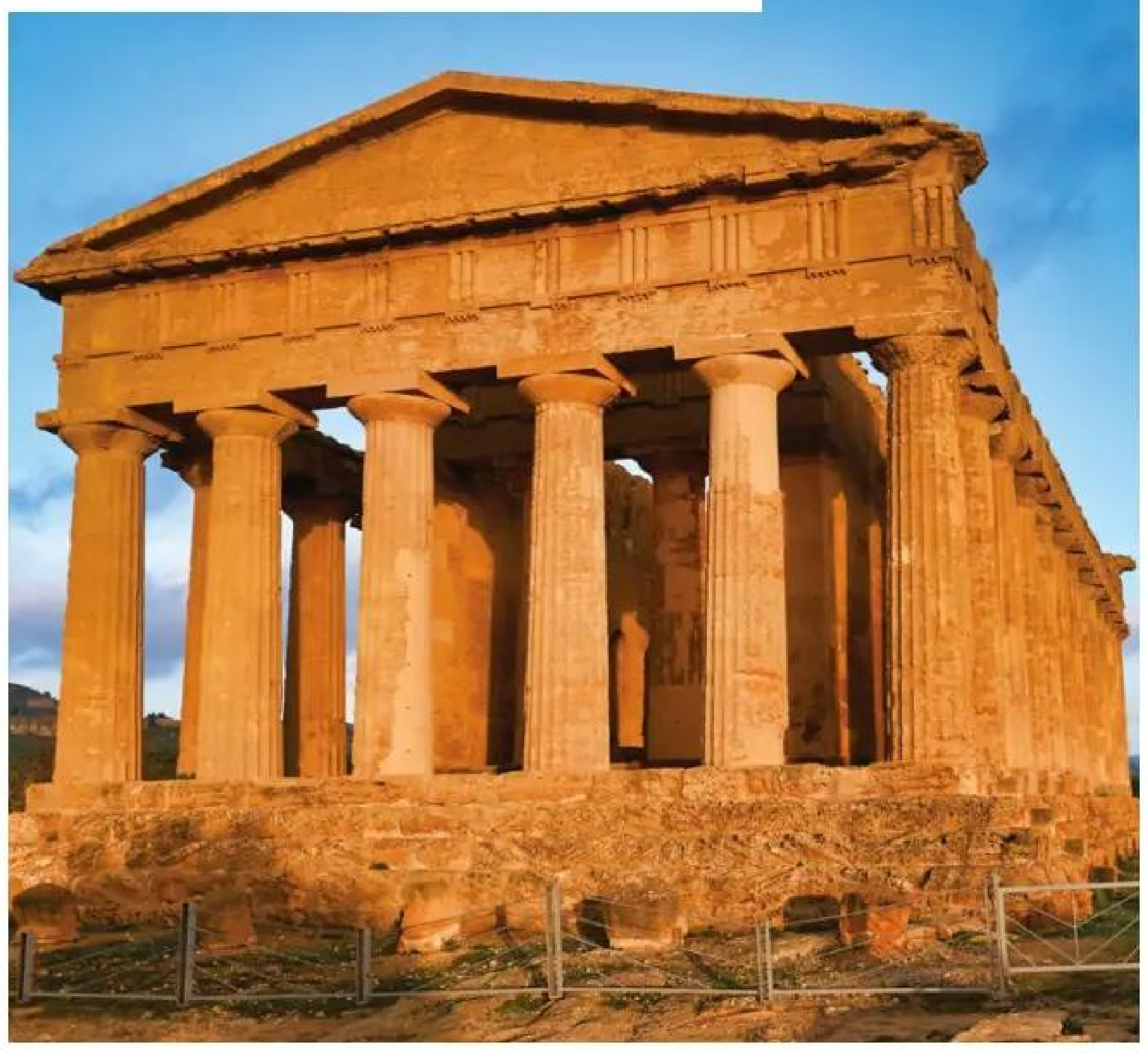
Despite the warm weather and mild winters, Mount Etna is topped with snow for several months of the year

> SICILY IS A HOTSPOT FOR ANCIENT ARCHITECTURAL RUINS

TOP TIP

Travel in the spring or autumn to avoid the largest crowds and hottest temperatures, while you can still enjoy the sunny weather.

The Valley of Temples is an extensive archaeological park with eight individual Greek temples to explore



from silky white sand to smooth pebbles and isolated coves. Enjoy clear waters that are ideal for snorkelling and warm enough for swimming from May through to October.

Cefalù offers the best of both worlds, with a beautiful historic town to explore alongside beaches with soft sand and turquoise waters. Located on the northern coast of Sicily, visitors can explore shops, restaurants and a Norman cathedral that dates back to 1131.

Considered to be one of the most beautiful beaches in the world, Rabbit Beach is located on the remote Sicilian island of Lampedusa. The beach is also a protected marine reserve and home to loggerhead sea turtles, which lay their eggs there between May and September.

While you're in the area, make sure to visit Sicily's plentiful vineyards and sample the region's distinctive Sicilian wine. There are so many vineyards in Sicily that they even climb the banks of Mount Etna, where there are several wineries to choose from. Located on the east coast, the volcano also has a nature reserve that's best visited in the evening for fantastic views of the landscape and sunshine that's less intense. Make sure you hop on the cable car at Rifugio Sapienza to travel hundreds of metres up the volcano with ease.

If you're looking for more islands to explore, Sicily is just a ferry ride away from the volcanic Aeolian Islands to the north and Linosa to the south.

EXPLORING SICILY'S CAPITAL CITY

Palermo has much to offer for visitors to Sicily. With a vibrant history involving Arab rule, a Norman invasion and the presence of the Mafia, there is a lot to explore within the city.

History buffs will enjoy walking through Palermo Cathedral, which dates back to around 1184, and has changed denomination several times depending on the ruling party. Other sights to see in Palermo include the neoclassical opera house, Teatro Massimo, famed for being featured in the final scene of *The Godfather III*. There's also the Norman Palace, baroque churches and street markets to peruse.

With so much to see, don't forget to stop by one of the many beaches in and around the city. Some of these can be accessed by public transport, and although the free beaches can become crowded during the summer, there are many paid options and beach clubs to soak up the sun.

Images Alamy

SARDINIA

PURE SHORES AND LAVISH STAYS MEET GRANITE ROCK AND ANCIENT WAYS ON THIS SANDY JEWEL IN TURQUOISE WATERS

WORDS **PETE WISE**

Journey far west of Naples or Rome, over miles and miles of Mediterranean Sea, and you will find Italy's furthest flung jewel: Sardinia. This island region is roughly as close to Tunisia as it is to the rest of Italy, and it has a distinctive culture and history. As some Sardinian separatists say, "Sardigna no est Italia".

The island is largely formed of granite and schist uplands, peaking at the summit of Punta La Marmora, 1,834 metres (6,017 feet) above sea level. At the coast, the hills give way to some of Europe's finest white sand beaches and glorious turquoise sea. No wonder most of Sardinia's larger towns and cities – including Sassari, Olbia and the capital, Cagliari – are coastal.

Sardinia has all the variety of a small country, which is unsurprising given that this autonomous region is larger than Wales , and well over twice the size of Cyprus..

Sardinian daydreams begin on the beach. The north-easterly Costa Smeralda is the go-to area for glitzy getaways, swanky resorts, legendary clubbing and excellent restaurants.

Far quieter and arguably more beautiful, the Costa Paradiso has some of the most stunning and secluded beaches in Sardinia, many of which are surrounded by dramatic landscapes. Close to Cagliari in the south-west, Spiaggia di Porto Giunco is famous for a nearby population of pink flamingos.

TOP TIP

Many Sardinian farmers have struggled in recent years due to droughts. Consider buying local produce to support the island's agriculture.

Adventure travellers will find superb hiking in Sardinia, including along the breathtaking east coast, and in remote regions such as the Geo-mining, Historical and Environmental Park of Sardinia – a tranquil area in the south-west that was once a coal mining hub.

Over 1.5 million people live in Sardinia, with major concentrations in Cagliari, and Sassari in the north-west. You'll find much of the best culture, nightlife and shopping in Cagliari, which would be a good choice as either a base camp for your Sardinian stay, or a city break destination in its own right.

Make time to visit Nuragica, Cagliari's must-see museum that tells the story of the Nuragic civilisation, who populated this island thousands of years before it became part of Italy. And if you're into football, you might be able to catch Serie A club Cagliari Calcio – once home to Gianfranco Zola – at their Unipol Domus stadium.

There's no bridge to Sardinia, so it's likely you'll arrive by plane at either Cagliari Airport in the south or Olbia Costa Smeralda Airport in the north.

If you're lucky enough to be based in the Mediterranean – or if you're visiting Sardinia as part of a longer tour – then you also have the option of reaching the island by ferry. Most ferry services to Sardinia depart from mainland Italy, with a journey duration of at least nine hours (and sometimes much longer). You can also sail to Sardinia from the south of France, Barcelona, and the French island of Corsica, just a short hop away.

Getting around Sardinia is easiest by hire car, or for some visitors, bicycle. The island's bus and rail networks do reach all of its regions, but services are relatively limited.

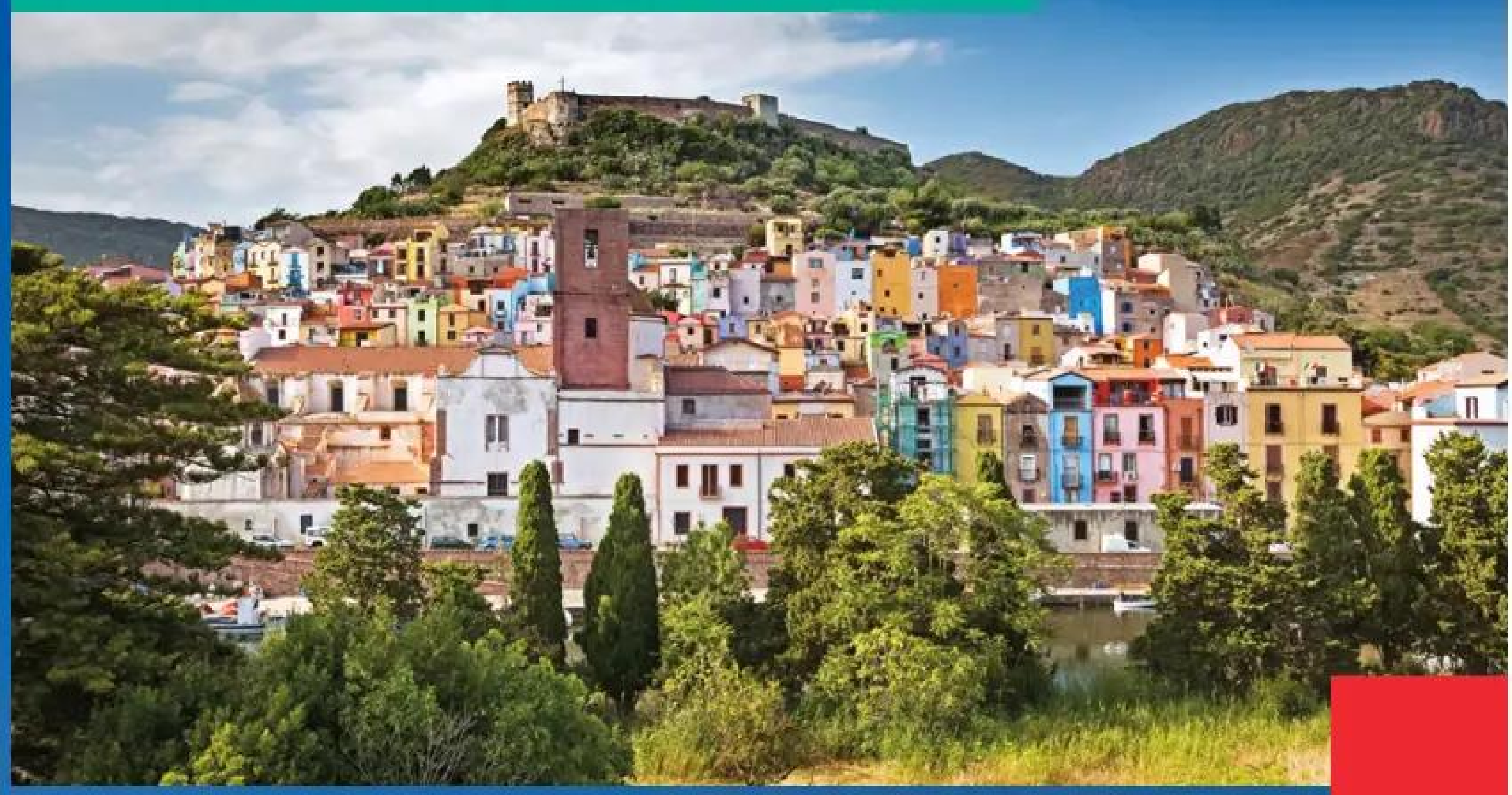
You have an abundance of accommodation options in much-visited Sardinia, ranging from whole home lets and agritourism stays to resorts and luxury hotels.

> “
> THE HILLS GIVE WAY TO SOME OF EUROPE'S FINEST WHITE SAND BEACHES

White sand and turquoise water are emblematic of Sardinia's coastline, including the beautiful Sa Colonia beach, Chia

Rugged terrain and spectacular coastal views make Sardinia a hiker's paradise

Sardinia has a distinct culture and history. Its own language, Sard, has over 1 million speakers – although Italian is more widely used on the island



EAT LIKE A SARDINIAN

Sardinia has a cuisine all of its own, and it'd be a shame not to taste some of the island's delicacies during your stay.

Culurgiones – a potato-stuffed pasta – are a homely, fragrant must-try, cooked to perfection at restaurants such as La Scarpetta in Nuoro.

Needless to say, seafood is another Sardinian speciality. If you're staying self-catered accommodation around Cagliari, pick up the catch of the day at the San Benedetto fish market, and cook up a storm.

If you have any room left for dessert, try a seada. After eating these savoury dumplings, lathered in honey and salt, you'll never look at a pancake the same way again.

Finally, wash your meal down with a glass of mirto, a myrtle liqueur that's made on the island.

Images Getty Images

THE AMALFI

GLAMOUR AND HISTORY, FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA

WORDS PETE WISE

TOP TIP

Some destinations have lots of steep hills and steps. A provider like disabledaccessibletravel.com can help plan an accessible trip.

You'll get your steps in on an Amalfi Coast holiday – especially if you visit ancient towns like Atrani

COAST

The Amalfi Coast. Those three words spark daydreams of fragrant citrus groves, glamorous living and the sparkling blue of the Tyrrhenian Sea. They're a holiday in themselves.

As the private helicopter flies, there's only 35 kilometres (22 miles) of Amalfi Coast, from the south-western tip of the Sorrentine Peninsula to the town of Vietri sul Mare, near Salerno. But don't be fooled: this coastline sequesters an abundance of Mediterranean travel pearls – Positano, Amalfi, Atrani, Maiori, Minori, and several others – all nestled between the Lattari Mountains and the sea.

The Amalfi Coast has a rich history. For a few centuries starting in 839, the city of Amalfi was capital of the independent Duchy of Amalfi, whose merchants dominated Italian trade for centuries. Amalfi was later absorbed into a succession of Italian states, and finally into the Italian Republic. Its medieval streets and buildings still bear witness to a fascinating past.

> WANDER THE STREETS, HIKE WALKING TRAILS, AND CHILL OUT ON SOME OF ITALY'S MOST SCENIC BEACHES

Luxury-seeking jet-setters, history buffs and adventure travellers will all find something to love on the Amalfi Coast. You can live 'La Dolce Vita' here – splashing out on boat trips and dining at plush restaurants like La Caravella (southern Italy's first Michelin Star recipient).

But in Amalfi, as anywhere, the best things in life are free. Wander the streets, hike walking trails such as the famous Path of the Gods, and chill out on some of Italy's most scenic beaches – using your own beach towel, rather than a pricey rented lounger. The most beautiful bathing (and sunbathing) spots include the secluded Spiaggia di Tordigliano, and Spiaggia dei Limoni near Cetara.

You'll find plenty to do in the famous towns of Positano – celebrated for its stunning views – and historic Amalfi. Arguably more beautiful still, Vietri sul Mare is a gorgeous small village at the eastern extremity of the coast, renowned for its ceramic-making heritage.

Another must-see is Atrani, a village-sized city with a remarkable Medieval layout of stairways, alleys and courtyards. If you feel like you've seen these distinctive scenes before, that might be because Atrani served as a primary filming location for the noirish Netflix thriller, *Ripley*.

During your stay, you can take a ferry from Amalfi or Positano to the island of Capri. After this short journey, you can enjoy Capri's super-high-end shopping, visit its striking Blue Grotto sea cave, weather permitting, and take in fabulous views back to the Amalfi Coast and the Bay of Naples.

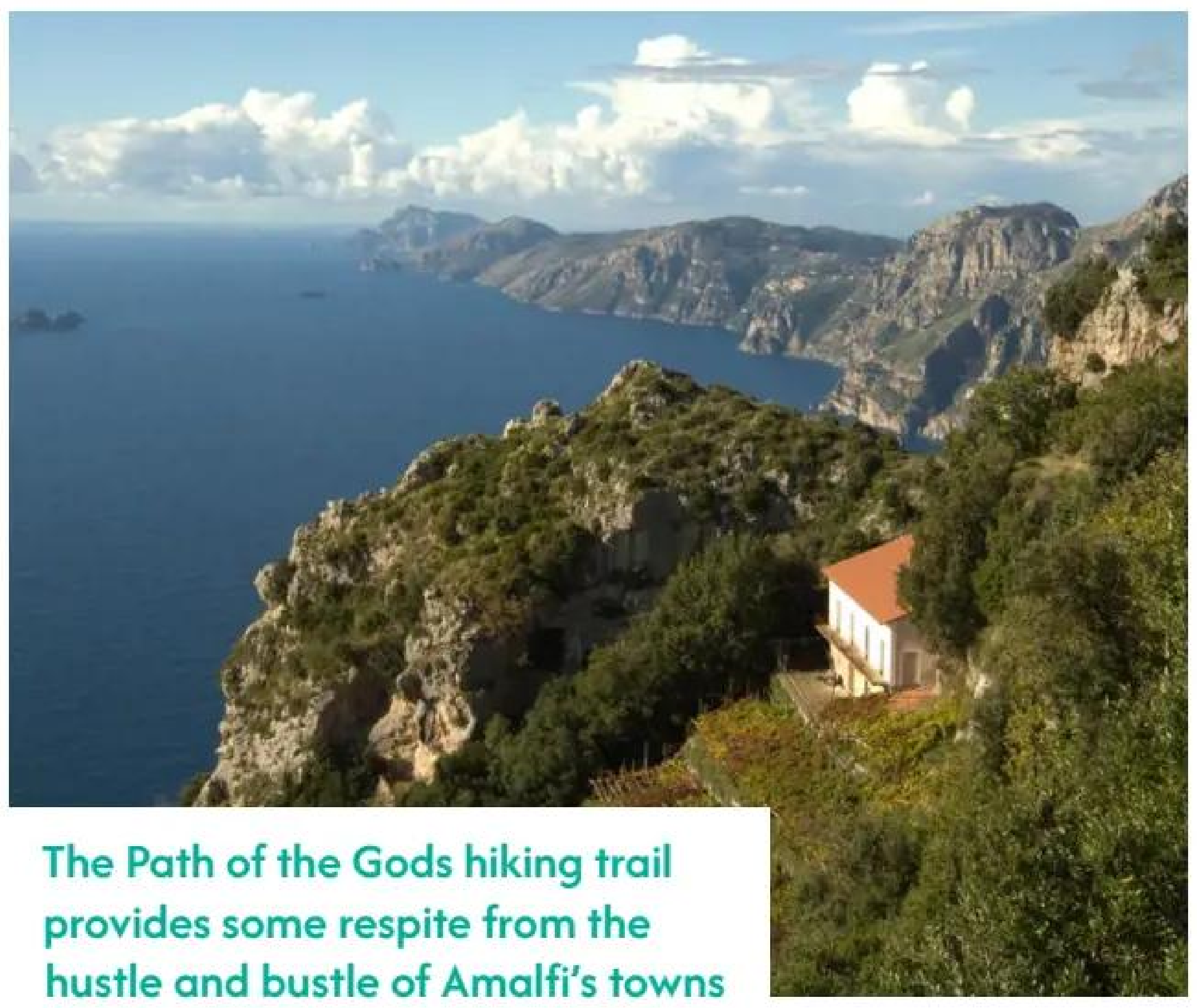
The Amalfi Coast is served by a small airport at Salerno, but travellers from overseas are likelier to touch down at Naples International Airport. From here – perhaps after grabbing a Neopolitan pizza – you can take a train to Sorrento, followed by a bus to Napoli.

There are no train services along the Amalfi Coast, but it can be reached via a single road, 'Amalfi Drive', which connects the coastal strip from Sorrento to Amalfi. Car travel around Amalfi is heavily restricted, especially in popular locations during high season. It's easier to get around by bus, or walk between neighbouring towns like Amalfi and Atrani.

Of course, the most glamorous way to arrive on the Amalfi Coast is by sea. Ferry and private charter services are available from departure points including Naples, Sorrento and Salerno.

When it comes to finding a place to stay, you'll be spoilt for choice. There are plenty of quality affordable options such as Amalfi Centro B&B, as well as five-star stunners like the Anantara Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel.

Feeling blue? Capri is just a short ferry journey from Amalfi or Positano, so you can visit its bougie shops and famous Blue Grotto



The Path of the Gods hiking trail provides some respite from the hustle and bustle of Amalfi's towns

WHERE LEMONS GIVE YOU LIFE

If you're visiting the Amalfi Coast in spring or summer, then you absolutely must sample the region's world-famous lemons. Several varieties including the iconic sfumato are collectively known as Amalfi lemons – a designation safeguarded by a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI).

Larger and milder than your average lemon, many Amalfi lemons can be eaten raw. They're commonly candied, or made into sauces, marinades, and drinks including Amalfi's iconic liqueur, limoncello.

If you want to sharpen up on these stellar citruses, book an activity with Amalfi Lemon Experience, which offers lemon grove tours, lunches and cooking classes.

Images Getty Images

Seafood
ALL-IN
€ 12,00
*MUSCOLI
e patatine
€ 5,00
FISH & CHI
€ 9,00
BACCALA'

For a cultural highlight, visit the hilltop castle of Riomaggiore, which dates back to the 13th century

CINQUE

There's no mistaking the brightly painted houses of Cinque Terre. In earthy yellows, blues, pinks and reds, they cling to the cliffs and coves of the Ligurian coast, forming the historic towns of Riomaggiore, Manarola, Corniglia, Vernazza and Monterosso al Mare.

The people of Cinque Terre were historically employed in viticulture, olive-growing and fishing – and you can still visit fabulous vineyards in the region today. From the 1970s, the postcard-perfect beauty of the area has made it a bucket list destination for visitors from around the globe. UNESCO added Cinque Terre to its list of World Heritage Sites in 1997 due to its incredible cultural landscape.

Cinque Terre is Italian for 'five lands', and its five towns are all indeed little worlds unto themselves. You can spend happy days simply wandering the streets, perusing the shops and eating snacks like gelato and – a Monterosso al Mare specialty – salted anchovies.

Each town has its own gems to discover. Some cultural highlights include the hilltop Castle of Riomaggiore, and Manarola's fabulous 14th-century church, the Chiesa di San Lorenzo. But ultimately, you will spend much of your time in Cinque Terre simply unwinding and taking in the beautiful surroundings and majestic views. Of course, there are countless places to do this – perhaps while snapping a few photos on your camera or smartphone – including the Insta-famous Manarola harbour, and the Convent of the Capuchin Friars in Monterosso.

The rugged beauty of Cinque Terre's coastline is a photographer's dream, but it does mean beaches are in relatively short supply. However, there are a few stellar bathing spots for confident swimmers, including the Marina di Corniglia.

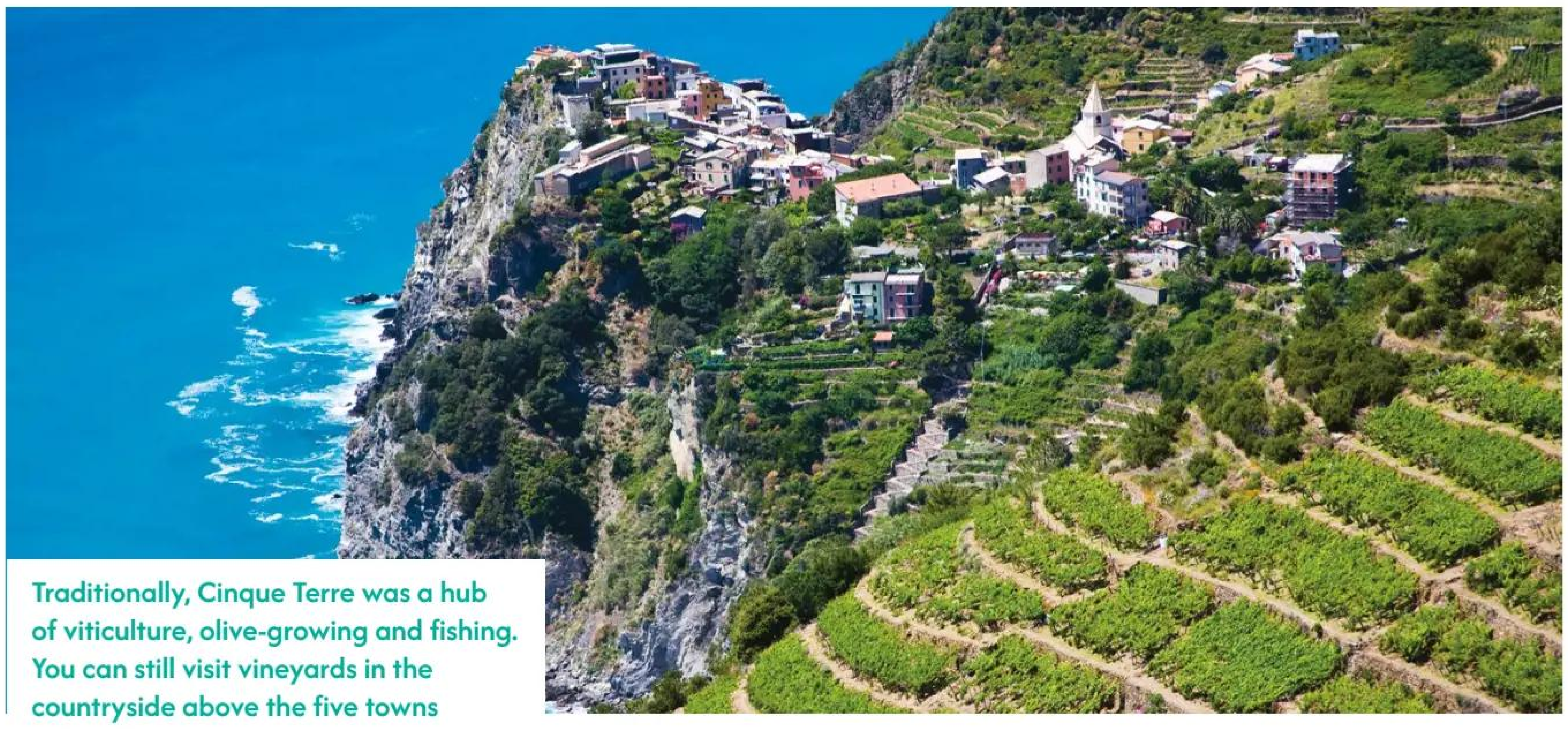
If you're into wine, book onto a vineyard tour or tasting evening with Cantina Capellini (near Manarola, open seasonally) where you can try a selection of wines and enjoy some light bites among the grapevines, in a sensational sea view location that witnesses some of the most fantastic sunsets imaginable.

There are several ways to get to Cinque Terre – but the only proper way is by sea. A ferry service runs to each of the towns (except Corniglia) from Levanto in the north and La Spezia in the south.

You can use this ferry service to get to Cinque Terre, and also as a way to hop between villages during your stay here. Arriving by sea will grant you unrivalled harbour views that you might recognise from your computer screensaver!

All of the Cinque Terre towns are accessible by train from La Spezia, Levanto, and the bigger transport hubs of Pisa and Genoa. This is the quickest, easiest way to get around Cinque Terre day-to-day. While there is some motor access close to the towns, travelling by car in this area is difficult due to limited parking and access restrictions in the towns themselves. Another option for energetic travellers is to walk between the towns via Cinque Terre's network of hiking routes – you can always take the train back to your starting point in the evening.

There are relatively few accommodation options in Cinque Terre itself, so you should book in plenty of time if you're visiting during the busiest months (May, June or September) and wish to stay in one of the five towns. The Hotel Marina in Monterosso al Mare and Camere Guiliano in Vernazza are highly rated. Holiday home lets are also widely available. You'd be mad to miss out on this picture-perfect stay.


Traditionally, Cinque Terre was a hub of viticulture, olive-growing and fishing. You can still visit vineyards in the countryside above the five towns

HIKING IN CINQUE TERRE

Cinque Terre is a national park, and it has the sensational hiking to prove it. There are 48 trails to traipse, covering 120 kilometres (75 miles) of coastline, hillsides, vineyards, and even a few considerable peaks. The most famous of the trails is a coastal route connecting the five towns, which requires the purchase of a Cinque Terre Trekking Card.

For a loftier perspective, walk the Sanctuary Way. This beautiful route runs along the uplands parallel to the coast, offering incredible views of the five towns and taking in several religious sites and vineyards – so you can get closer to the history and spirit of the region.

The trails here are well maintained, with good signage and reliable surfaces. However, you'll need hiking boots – or at least a pair of supportive trainers – to walk the routes safely. Check for route closures before you lace up.

Images Getty Images

TERRE

FIVE-STAR VIEWS AND BRILLIANT HUES, THESE FIVE COASTAL VILLAGES ARE JEWELS OF THE LIGURIAN COASTLINE

WORDS PETE WISE

TOP TIP

Don't skip Corniglia! Explore the winding streets, grab a sandwich from Andrea's and swim at the Marina di Corniglia.

> "YOU CAN SPEND HAPPY DAYS SIMPLY WANDERING THE STREETS

The blues, pinks, reds and yellows of Cinque Terre's iconic buildings look their best at sunset

THE ITALIAN

Resting at the foothills of the Alps, right at the northern tip of Italy, you can find some of the world's most beautiful places. Italy's lakes are breathtaking, with the sun glinting off the crests of small waves, and the peaks of Europe's most famous mountain range providing a dramatic backdrop.

It's perhaps best to start with arguably the most famous lake that Italy offers: Lake Como. Attracting tourists and celebrities alike, it's difficult to see why you wouldn't want to visit. Surrounded by gorgeous scenery, mountains and wooded hills, the shores are home to exquisite villas and small, traditional Italian towns. Just miles from the Swiss border, the lake boasts 146 square kilometres (56 square miles) of tranquil water. Located at the southwestern tip of the lake is the city of Como, and it's a wonderful place to spend an afternoon or even a whole day. The capital of a region famous for silk products, it's the perfect place to buy gifts before heading to the historic heart of the city. There, you can see the magnificent 15th-century duomo before heading to the small village of Brunate on a cable car, getting a magnificent view of the lake from above on the way.

Head west from Lake Como to pass through the stunning Swiss town of Lugano before making your way back into Italy, stumbling across Lake Maggiore. While this body of water is shared with Switzerland, it is still Italy's second largest lake and absolutely worth a visit. Sitting at a crossroads between different communities, it's the ideal place to discover the Swiss, Lombard and Piedmontese history and traditions. The shores and hills are perfect for mountain biking and walking, with routes that host breathtaking views and beautiful islands. Isola Bella, for instance, is home to a stunning 17th-century palace.

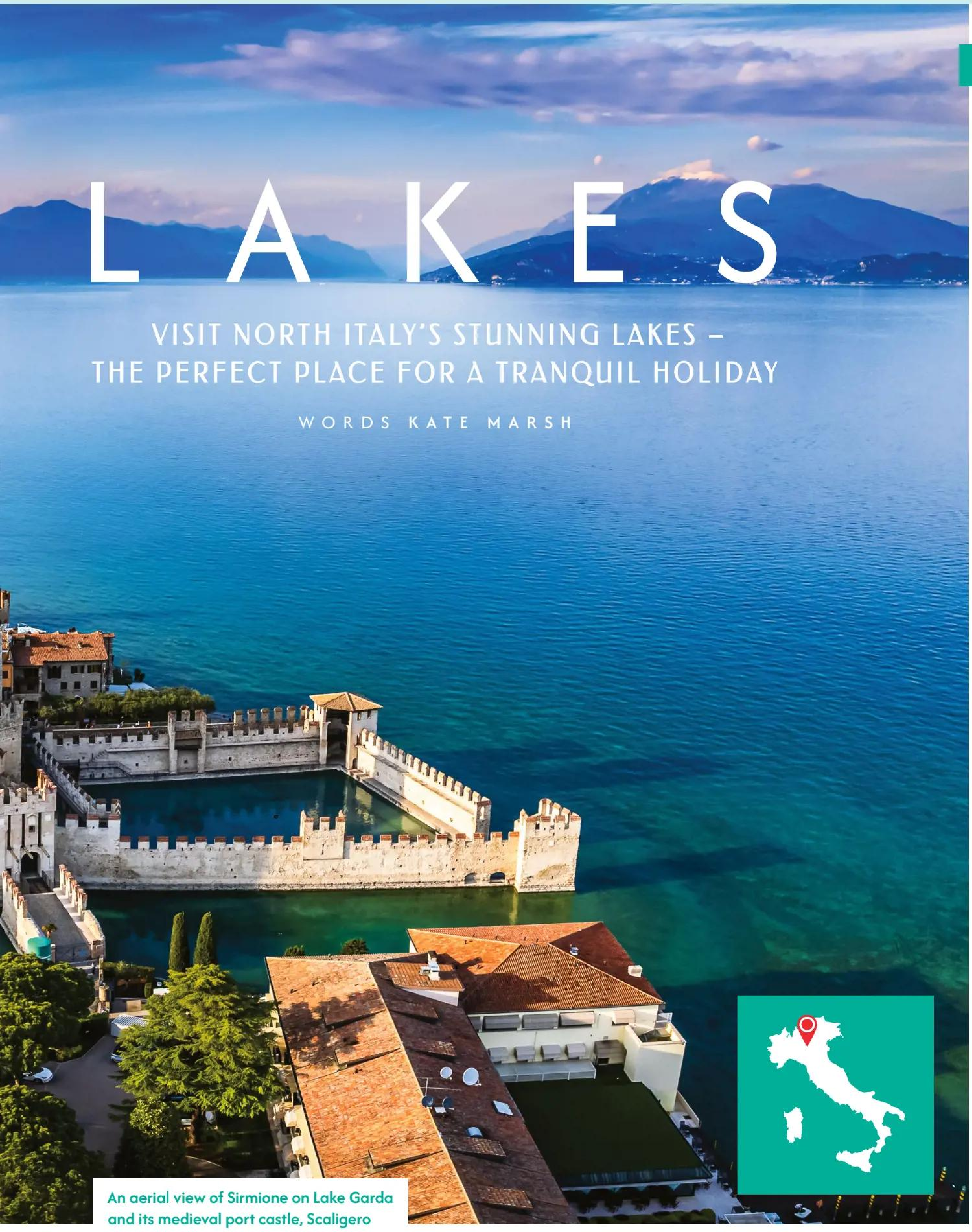
Heading further west, you'll come across Lake Orta. Smaller than the other lakes at only 18.2 square kilometres (seven square miles), Orta is certainly no less beautiful. Perhaps because of its size, Orta isn't frequented by so many tourists, making it the perfect place to spend a romantic break. For some culture, the town of Orta San Giulio is the one for you, with its piazza and narrow, cobbled streets.

About halfway between Milan and Venice lies Italy's biggest lake, Garda. The calm, blue water is surrounded by olive and lemon groves, and palm and cypress trees, making it seem like a veritable paradise, and there's a boatful of activities that you can do there. Why not have a go at sailing or windsurfing? The conditions on Garda are ideal and there are plenty of companies offering lessons and equipment. If you want to spend more time on the water, you can also try your hand at kite surfing and even diving. Prefer something not quite so active? Check out one of the many beaches and treat yourself to a swim in the beautifully clear water.

LAKES

VISIT NORTH ITALY'S STUNNING LAKES – THE PERFECT PLACE FOR A TRANQUIL HOLIDAY

WORDS KATE MARSH



An aerial view of Sirmione on Lake Garda and its medieval port castle, Scaligero

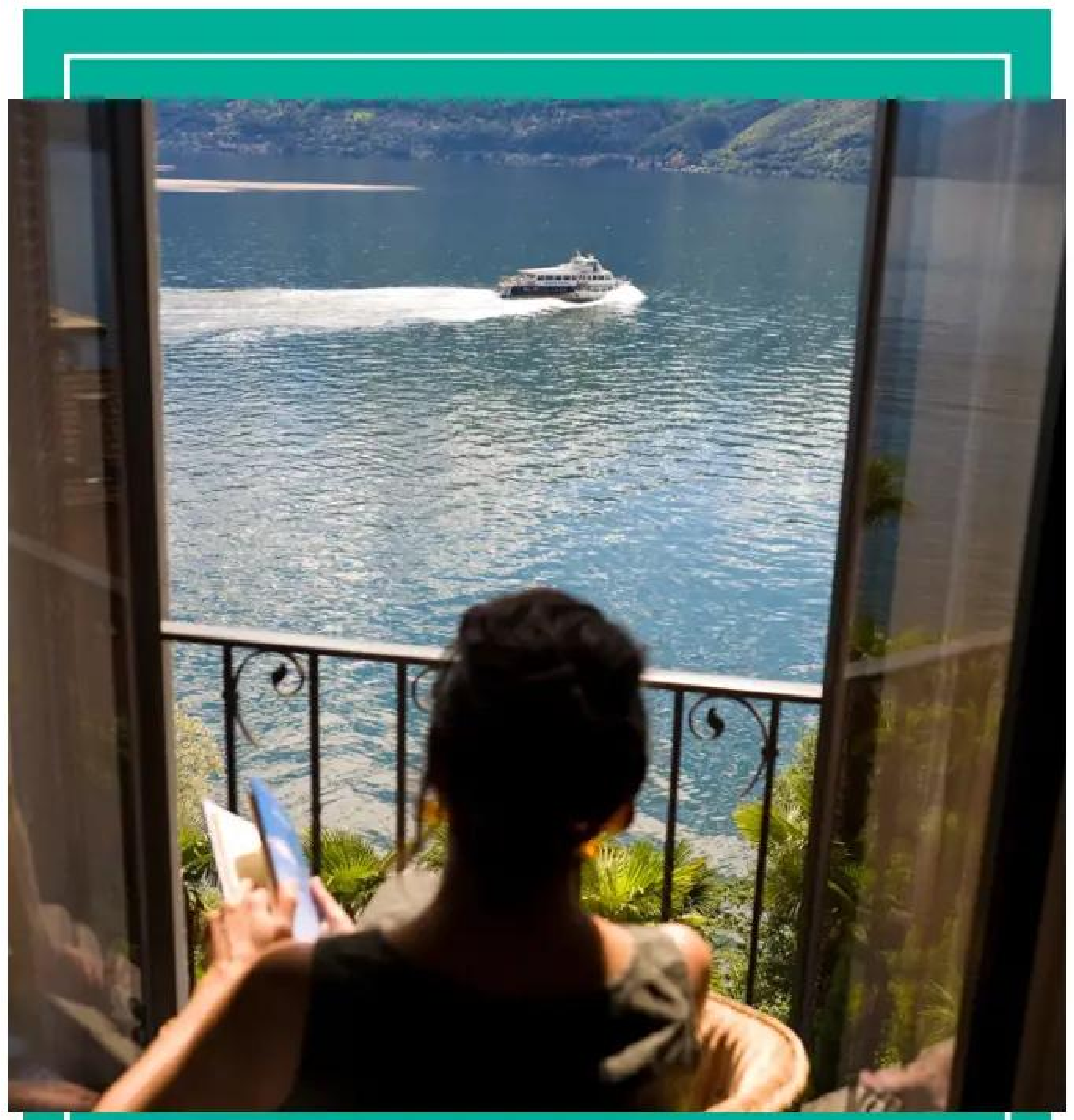
When you've had enough of being out on the blue, cycle one of the many biking trails, go for a scenic walk, or get your adrenaline pumping by going rock climbing. For real thrill-seekers why not go paragliding to see Lake Garda from the air or visit a nearby theme park.

For those looking for something a little more relaxed, check out the golf courses or visit some of the towns and villages overlooking the lake. The town of Riva del Garda, for instance, situated right at the north of Lake Garda, is home to a history museum as well as a medieval belfry that offers stunning views of the water. Make sure you explore Sirmione. Known for its thermal springs, it also has a beautiful medieval port fortress and picturesque Italian churches.

If you're looking for a lake closer to Milan, try Lake Iseo. Take a boat trip to see the three islands in the middle, or see it all from above with a helicopter ride. If you fancy a tipple, wine tasting is also available and you'd be pushed to find a more beautiful environment for it. And to cap off a perfect day, go kayaking or canoeing at night. If you have a spare day, take a look at the largest island in the middle of Lake Iseo, Monte Isola, to see some real rural Italian villages.

There's also plenty to do for lovers of history. There are churches, chapels, sanctuaries and monasteries littered all around the lake, along with enough museums and art galleries to keep you entertained and educated for days. You can also visit beautiful buildings like the Monument to the Redeemer and the Villa Giuseppe Faccanoni, in addition to fortresses, clock towers and medieval houses.

So, if you're after a relaxing weekend at a calm lakeside resort or an action-packed holiday with water sports, treks and rock climbing galore, the Italian lakes are a must. With glinting blue waters, snow-capped mountains and endless activities, you really can't go wrong.



WHERE TO STAY

One of the best things about the Italian lakes is the variety of accommodation that's on offer. For those keen on sleeping under the stars, there are plenty of campsites available – Lake Garda alone has ten sites, so you can wake early and see the sun rise over the water.

If you'd rather have a roof over your head, an option is to stay at one of the many beautiful hotels in the towns surrounding the lakes. No matter which lake you're visiting, you'll be spoilt for choice with establishments to suit every budget.

For something a little more private, there are also many companies that rent out entire villas. This is especially good when you're travelling with a group as you can split the cost between you instead of renting individual hotel rooms. But whatever type of holiday you're after, there's bound to be some accommodation on offer to suit you.

It's hard to resist the allure of the Italian Lakes and their spectacular shores

The town of Riva del Garda on the shore of Lake Garda

Images Getty Images

The Dolomites project a beauty that can only be found in nature at its wildest: dramatic, romantic and rugged. Sheer rock walls, cragged spires and steeples rise over valleys, wide and narrow – contrasted by soft snow in winter and rolling fields, forests and flowers come spring.

Having hosted the 1956 Winter Olympics, the range is perhaps best known for its winter landscape; with the Dolomiti Superski pass giving access to more than 1,200 kilometres (746 miles) of slopes. The 2,275-metre (7,464-feet) high Kronplatz ski resort hosts some 116 kilometres (72 miles) of pearlescent pistes of varying difficulties, complete with picturesque forests and panoramic views of the UNESCO World Heritage mountains.

It is also home to the Messner Mountain Museum, a testament to the history of mountaineering, from the mind of legendary climber Reinhold Messner. Designed by famous architect Zaha Hadid, it rests along the most spectacular viewing platform in the region; in warmer months, paragliders and tandem riders float down into the valley from here.

However, no winter adventure is complete without a trip down the Sellaronda circuit. The gruelling 26-kilometre (16-mile) run can take six hours to complete, which is made a little more palatable thanks to the abundance of restaurants nearby, dishing up delicious dumplings and bombardinos – an egg nog or advocaat-based winter toddy. Overnight refuge can be found at the Dolomites' various 'rifugios' – high-altitude mountain huts.

In spring, the Dolomites are transformed from a winter wonderland to a hiker's paradise. Edelweiss, silvery cranesbill and mezereon lend the valleys a hearty dose of colour and fragrance celebrated at the Antonio Segni Alpine Botanical Garden.

One of the quintessential Dolomite trails is the forested stroll to the baby-blue Lake Sorapis. Along the way, adventurers have the opportunity to explore tunnels dug by soldiers during World War I, when Italy fought the Austro-Hungarian Empire for control of the area. However, for the truly daring, the Brigata Tridentina route requires hikers to climb near-sheer cliff faces, while navigating the 'via ferrata' mountaineering system invented during the war, using metal rungs, safety cables, bridge ladders, chains and suspension bridges.

Amid the various trails of Val Gardena, the Gardena Museum offers insight into the local tradition of woodcarving, with some prolific pieces on display at the Monte Pana Chapel and San Giacomo Church. There are also ruins to explore, such as a 13th-century castle owned by renowned composer and poet Count Wolkenstein. The area is also a cyclist's dream, with numerous biking trails. Many riders enjoy the 52-kilometre (31-mile route) around the Sellaronda, once the snow has melted.

There is no finer way to round off a tiring day than an immersion in the region's unique combination of local, Italian and German cuisine. The Dolomites boast the highest density of Michelin-starred chefs in Italy, with the small Alta Badia home to six alone. St Hubertus, in San Cassiano, prides itself on celebrating local mountain ingredients under three-Michelin-star chef Norbert Niederkofler.

There's no shortage of villages, forests or mountains to explore in the Dolomites

THE

DOLOMITES

COME SNOW OR SUN, ITALY'S DOLOMITES ARE A HAVEN OF FAIR WEATHER AND WINTER ADVENTURE

WORDS **HARETH AL BUSTANI**

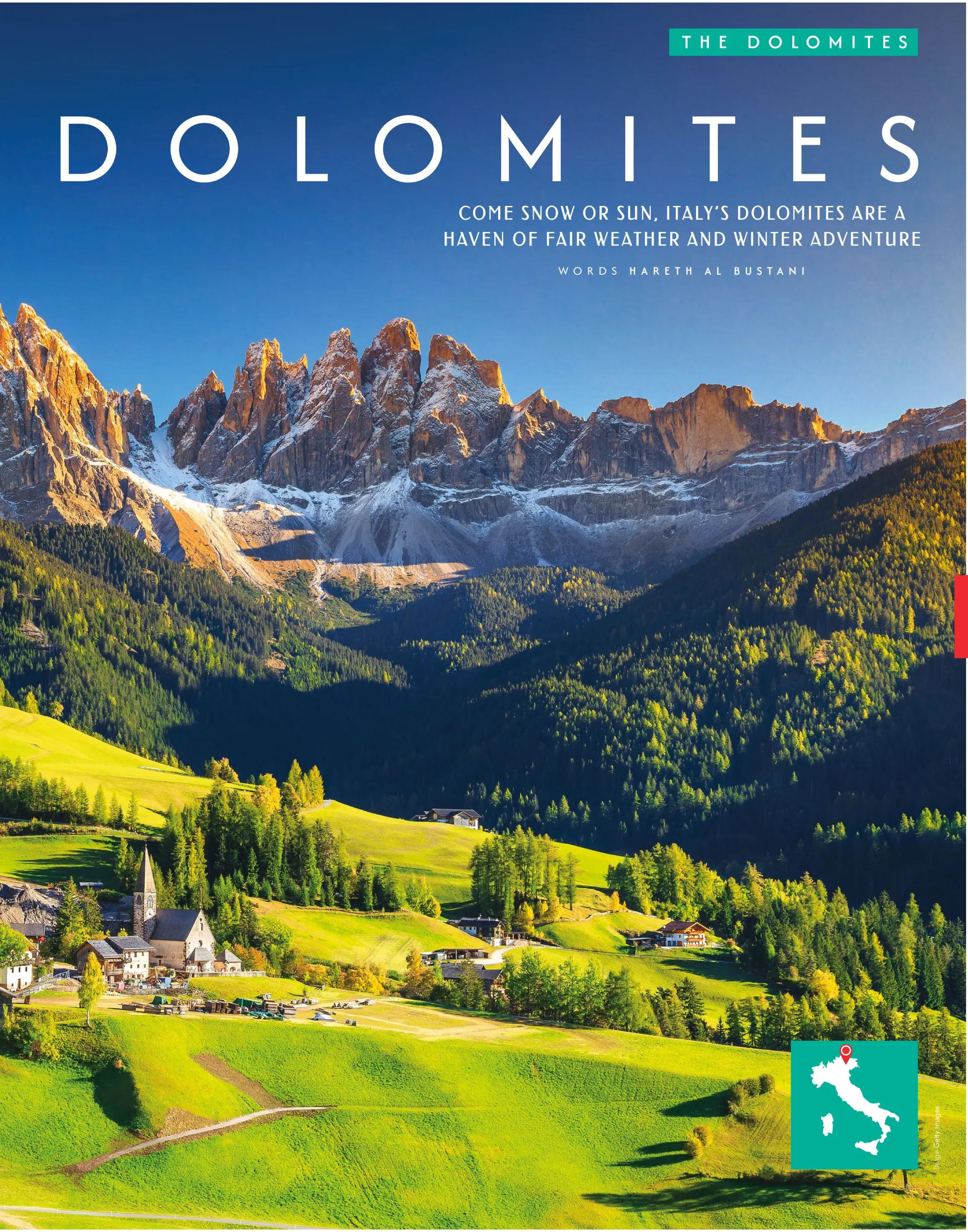


Image Getty Images

CU

Image Getty Images

LTURA

CULTURE

LA BELLA LINGUA ITALIANA

THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE IS ONE FILLED WITH ROMANCE, ECSTASY AND AGONY. TO HEAR IT IS TO FALL DEEPLY IN LOVE, BUT TO FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS COMPLEXITIES IS A LITTLE HARDER THAN YOU MAY THINK

WORDS **BEE GINGER**

The Italian language can undoubtedly be described as a Romance language. It was originally developed from the unfortunately named Vulgar Latin, which was a more colloquial form spoken during the time of the Roman Empire. It has evolved to influence classical music, culinary traditions and literature, but this *lingua dell'amore* (language of love) is so much more than just a collection of words.

Italians are open in their style of communication and exude warmth; as passionate and expressive people they can on occasion be unashamedly direct at times. Their body language is also expressive, with hand gestures to express or explain something or a friendly hand on the shoulder to offer support, friendship or just a show of enthusiasm.

The official and 'standard' version of Italian was established in 1861 when the country officially unified, however, only around 2.5 per cent of the country's population could actually speak it, with most instead speaking their own varying patois. It was left up to the government of the time to select which dialect was most pleasing to the ear and to discard the less pleasant options. They settled on a Tuscan dialect and attempted to use this version to unify the country. Further efforts were made to transform the Italian language into the official language of the country, and in March 2007 the government was finally successful. Italian had reached official status, yet despite the efforts of the authorities, only 93 per cent of the country are native speakers, with a large percentage still preferring their regional dialect.

The origins of the Italian language can be traced back to 14th-century literature, when

SVIZZERA
REGNO D'ITALIA
VENEZIA
ISTRIA
Bosnia
(Sogg. alla Turchia)
DALMAZIA
TORINO
MONACO
EMILIA
TOSCANA
S.MARINO
Ancona
MARCHE
UMBRIA
STATO ROMANO PONTIFICIO
CORSICA
Caprera
SARDEGNA
ABRUZZO e MOLISE
PUGLIE
CAMPANIA
Napoli
BASILICATA
CALABRIA
Palermo
Calatafimi
SICILIA
Catania
Girgenti
Pantelleria
5-5-1860
7-9-1860
11-5-1860

Italy used to be divided into regions, each with their own dialect

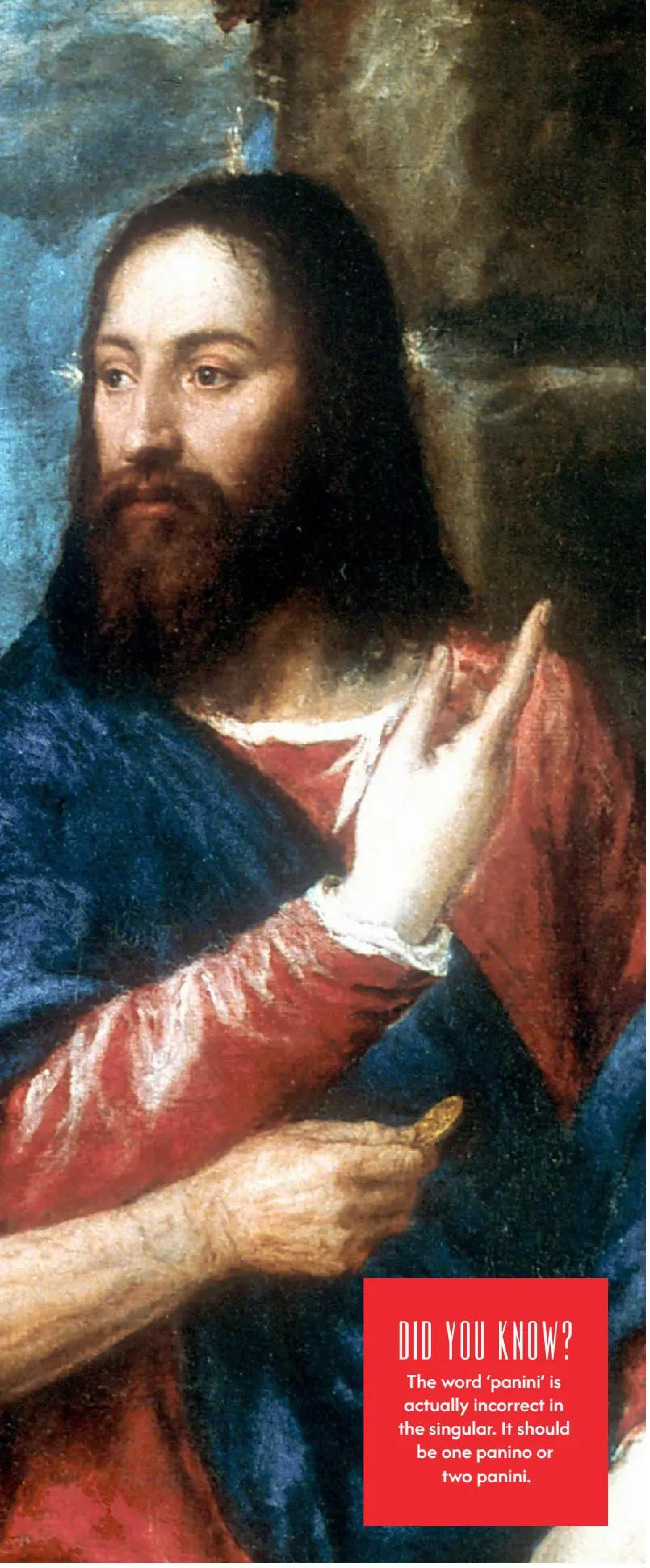
The language's melodic pronunciation combines with gestures and facial expressions, which in themselves can speak a thousand words

IT'S NOT *WHAT* YOU SAY, IT'S *HOW* YOU SAY IT

You will notice that the pronunciation of Italian words is largely phonetic, meaning they are vocalised as they are written. Syllables are pronounced cleanly and distinctly, and vowels remain consistent. The language boasts an impressive six different types of consonants: plosive, fricative, vibrant, lateral, affricate and nasal. Pronunciation also differs greatly depending on which vowel follows the consonant; some words will take on either a hard or soft intonation. The most important thing to remember is to have fun when speaking a new language - you are bound to make mistakes, but as with anything in life, that's how you learn!

Aa	Bb	Cc	Dd	Ee	Ff	Gg	Hh	Ii	Ll	Mm
A/Ah	*Bi*	*Ci-Chee*	*Di*	*E*	*Effe*	*Gi*	*Acca*	*I*	*Elle*	*Emme*

Images Alamy, Getty Images



DID YOU KNOW?

The word 'panini' is actually incorrect in the singular. It should be one panino or two panini.

> A GREAT DEAL OF ITALIAN WORDS ALSO HAVE ROOTS IN THE WORLD OF ART AND MUSIC, SUCH AS 'STACCATO', 'ALLEGRO' AND 'PIANO'

Dante's *La Divina Commedia* was the first text written in the Italian language

it became the favoured language by poets and authors such as Dante Alighieri. His works became a key component in the Italian language and the country's culture as a whole (prior to his integral works, texts were all written in Latin).

When we compare the Italian language to English, we notice a number of grammatical quirks. For example, the majority of words end in a vowel, and there are seven vowel sounds altogether, five of which are distinct, while the other two are called phonemes – a sort of extra sound like a long 'O' for example. Italian also has some rather complex words, some of which have made their way into the English language, and many of which you will recognise, such as 'broccoli', 'terracotta' and 'fiasco' (hopefully the latter not too often). A great deal of Italian words also have roots in the world of art and music, including 'staccato', 'allegro' and 'piano'.

Interestingly the primary Italian alphabet only consists of 21 letters. Although the official Italian language has the same number of letters as the English alphabet (26), some of the words that use the letters J, K, W, and Y are more likely derived from loanwords, which are words adopted from other foreign languages. The longest word in the Italian language is 'precipitevolissimevolmente', which is loosely translated as 'very hurriedly'. It has an impressive 26 characters – ideal for lovers of Scrabble!

Italian boasts a distinct rhythmic quality, which is in part due to the stress placed on the second-to-last syllable of words with an accent mark, like *lunedì* (Monday) or *caffè* (coffee). *Le doppie* (double consonants) also play a big part in the flow and meaning of certain words. For example, '*casa*' means house however, when an additional 's' is added, it changes the meaning of the word to box (*cassa*). With the exception of the letter 'h', all consonants can be doubled, and once you have mastered the pronunciation you too will be speaking like an 'official' Italian in no time at all!

THE LETTER C

When it comes before A, O or U, C is pronounced as a hard C /k/, as in 'cat'.

FOR EXAMPLE

Colore (colour)
- *Mi piace il colore rosse*
I like the colour red

When C comes before an E or I, it is pronounced as a soft 'CH' sound, as in 'cheese'.

FOR EXAMPLE

Città (city)
- *Verona è una città bellissima.*
Verona is a beautiful city

THE LETTER G

When G comes before A, O or U the G is pronounced as a hard G (as in 'golf').

FOR EXAMPLE

Gusto (to taste) and *gondola* (the Venetian rowing boat) are examples of a hard G.

When G comes before E or I it is pronounced much softer (as in 'gem').

FOR EXAMPLE

Gelato (ice cream)
- *È sempre l'ora del gelato*
It is always ice cream o'clock

THE LETTER R

Make a single R sound by tapping your tongue behind your front teeth, just like the sound of an L.

FOR EXAMPLE

Andare (to go) and *Roma* (Rome)
- *Andare a Roma*
To go to Rome

With a double RR your tongue remains in the same position, only you give it a little trill, like you are rolling your letters. This is used for words like *burro* (bùr·ro - butter) or *torta* (tór·ta - cake).

Nn	Oo	Pp	Qq	Rr	Ss	Tt	Uu	Vv	Zz
Enne	*O*	*Pi*	*Cu*	*Erre*	*Esse*	*Ti*	*U*	*Vu-Vi*	*Zeta*

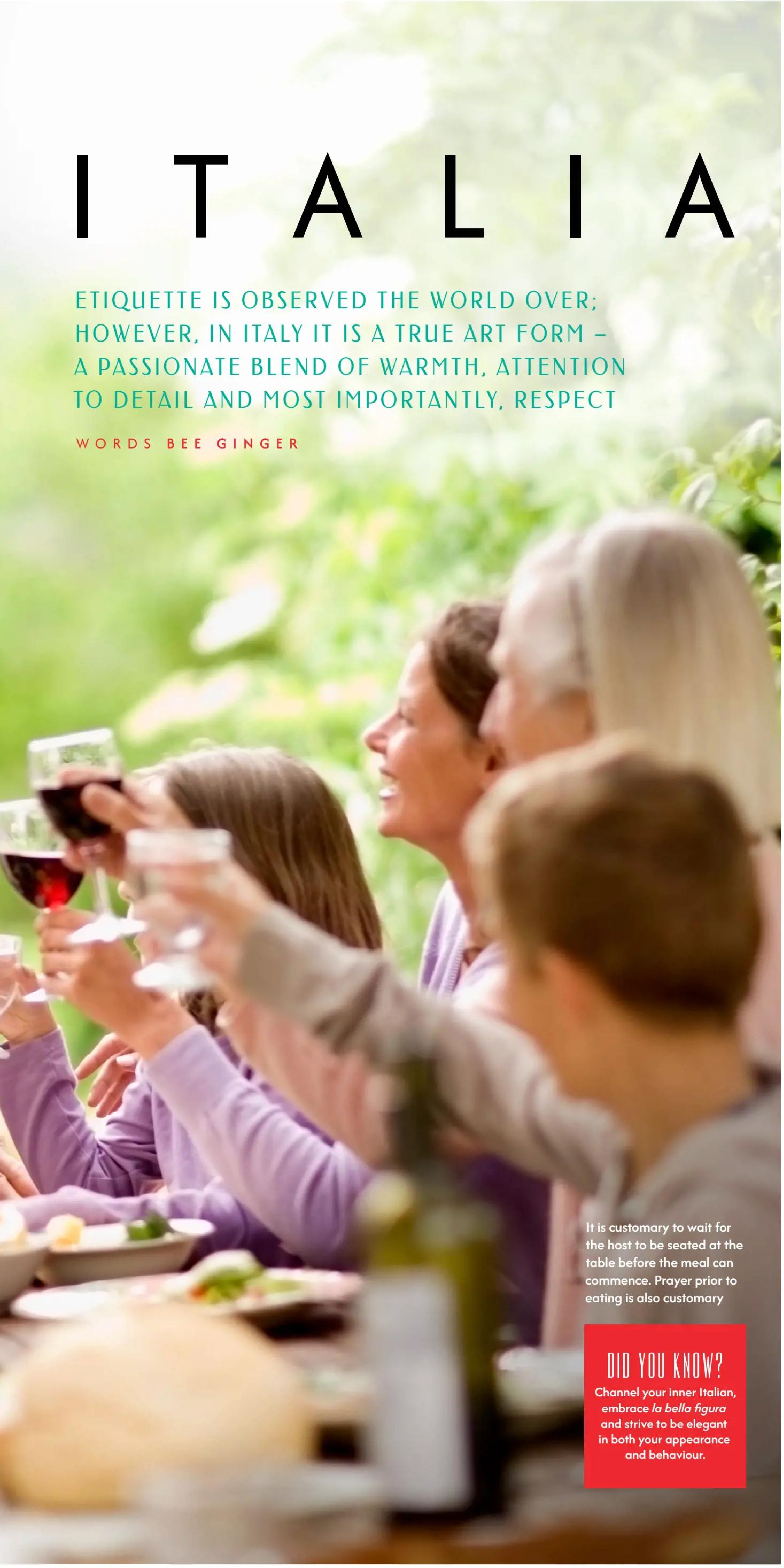
Double consonants give Italian its rhythmic flow. Some words you probably already use, like pizza and cappuccino. It is important to distinguish between single and double consonants to not cause confusion. For example, *note* (notes) and *notte* (night). There are many other anomalies in Italian, which makes mastering it both frustrating and *stupendo* at the same time!

GALATEO

"

WHEN VISITING, IT IS COMMONPLACE TO BRING A SMALL GIFT OF FLOWERS, WINE OR CHOCOLATES... A GESTURE FOR THE HOST

Image Getty Images



ITALIANO

ETIQUETTE IS OBSERVED THE WORLD OVER; HOWEVER, IN ITALY IT IS A TRUE ART FORM – A PASSIONATE BLEND OF WARMTH, ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, RESPECT

WORDS BEE GINGER

It is customary to wait for the host to be seated at the table before the meal can commence. Prayer prior to eating is also customary

DID YOU KNOW?

Channel your inner Italian, embrace *la bella figura* and strive to be elegant in both your appearance and behaviour.

Including the islands of Sardinia and Sicily, there are 20 regions in Italy, each with a very distinct culture that unite together to create a national identity that the Italians are – quite rightly – immensely proud of. When visiting *il bel paese* (this beautiful country), taking the time to understand the depth and romance of the Italian language is a unique way to truly embrace the essence of Italy. It is about far more than just words, though: it is about understanding body language, the facial expressions and hand gestures that convey a myriad of different emotions.

Etiquette is itself a language, one of guidance, and although behaviours and interactions will often come naturally to you, other times it may need to be taught to allow for respectful communication with other people. Knowing what is considered *educato* (polite) or *maleducato* (impolite) in Italy can often differ from the etiquette of other countries. While some will no doubt be familiar, others could surprise you.

The Italians have long embraced the subject, with the first book on etiquette being published in 1558 in Venice. *Il Galateo* (meaning etiquette) by Florentine Giovanni della Casa was an unusual publication at the time and considered by many to be the courtesy Bible of the era when it came to navigating the dos and don'ts of social life in the age of Renaissance Italy. Many of its suggestions regarding table manners, dress sense and conversation are still upheld today. Similarly, the concept of *la dolce vita* (the sweet life), is also deeply ingrained in Italian culture. It is the country's version of hygge – taking the time to enjoy life's simple pleasures. One such example of this is enjoying a meal with family, because to the Italians, family always comes first.

FAMILY FIRST

La famiglia is one of the cornerstones of Italian culture, with much of life revolving around the family. Many generations often live together under one roof, so understanding familial etiquette is integral. The heads of the family are the elders and they are held in high esteem by the family and society as a whole, therefore it is respectful to always acknowledge and greet them first. Family gatherings are important and many families traditionally get together for a meal on Sundays and on holidays. When visiting it is commonplace to bring a small gift of flowers, wine or chocolates… a gesture for the host. If you arrive before a meal then you are welcome and often expected to stay. Punctuality is a little vague in Italy; arriving on time can mean 30 or so minutes after the arranged time. On arrival it is customary to give a *bacio* (kiss) on each cheek in greeting, irrespective of gender. Formal greetings such as *buonasera* (good evening) and *buongiorno* (good morning) are recommended when speaking with elders, rather than the informal greeting of *ciao*. Respect for the elderly is paramount – opening doors for older family members, standing to greet them when they enter a room and allowing them to enter a room first is common practice in Italian culture.

FOOD RULES

Second to family is food, which is a huge part of the daily life and culture of Italians. Although it is there to be enjoyed, there are a few rules that visitors are politely advised to observe. You may already have heard of the 'no cappuccino after 11am' rule (espresso, however, can be enjoyed throughout the day) but there are many mealtime traditions that are less well known. For example meals, especially on special occasions, can take many hours to finish as food is not the only focus; instead it is conversation.

Al fresco (outdoor) dining is hugely popular in the warmer months and more often than not lunch is the main meal of the day, with breakfast being a less important meal and quite often skipped (apart from the obligatory coffee). Bread on the dinner table is not usually there to nibble on before the first course arrives, instead it is for mopping up delicious sauces left on the plate at the end of a meal. This practice is called *fare la scarpetta* and finishing your plate is seen as a huge compliment to the host or chef.

Etiquette dictates that everyone must be served before eating can commence, and no one leaves the table until everyone has had their fill. Good etiquette also dictates that hands are kept visible above the table when not eating – this demonstrates openness and engagement, whereas placing hands in your lap may be construed as rude or even suspicious. Plates should be passed to the left in order to circulate the food around the table, and in formal settings cutlery, even when eating pizza, should be used at all times. Guests are as the name would imply – there as a visitor and therefore exempt from helping to clear up when the meal is over. Interestingly it is considered a faux pas to eat while walking, this is with the exception of gelato, which tastes so much better when combining it with a post-dinner evening stroll.

DINING OUT

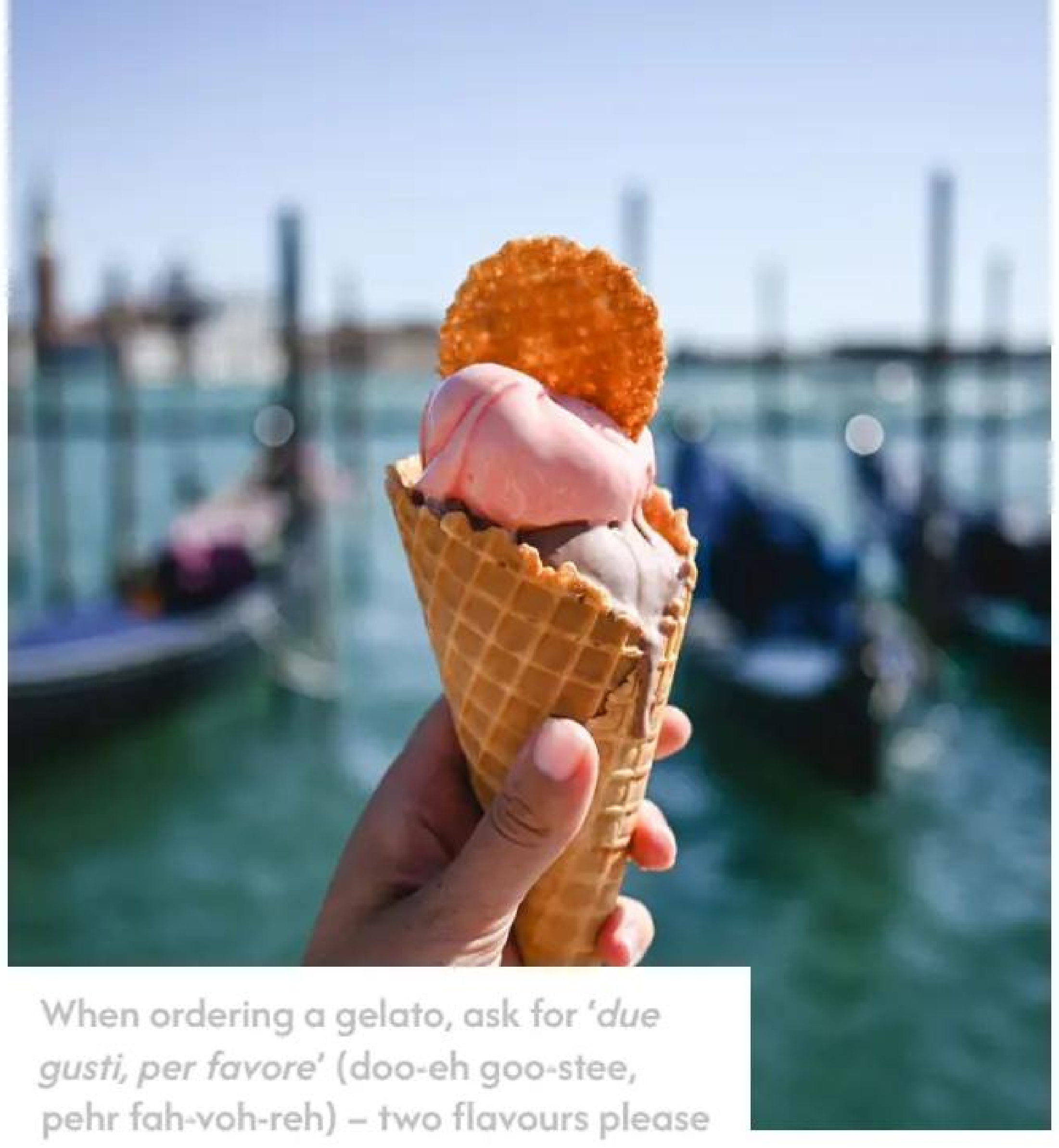
Dining out is always a treat, but in Italy it is a culinary experience like no other. Etiquette when dining out is of immense importance and those who don't adhere to it are frowned upon. Traditional Italian meals are skilfully

PHRASES YOU CAN USE EVERY DAY

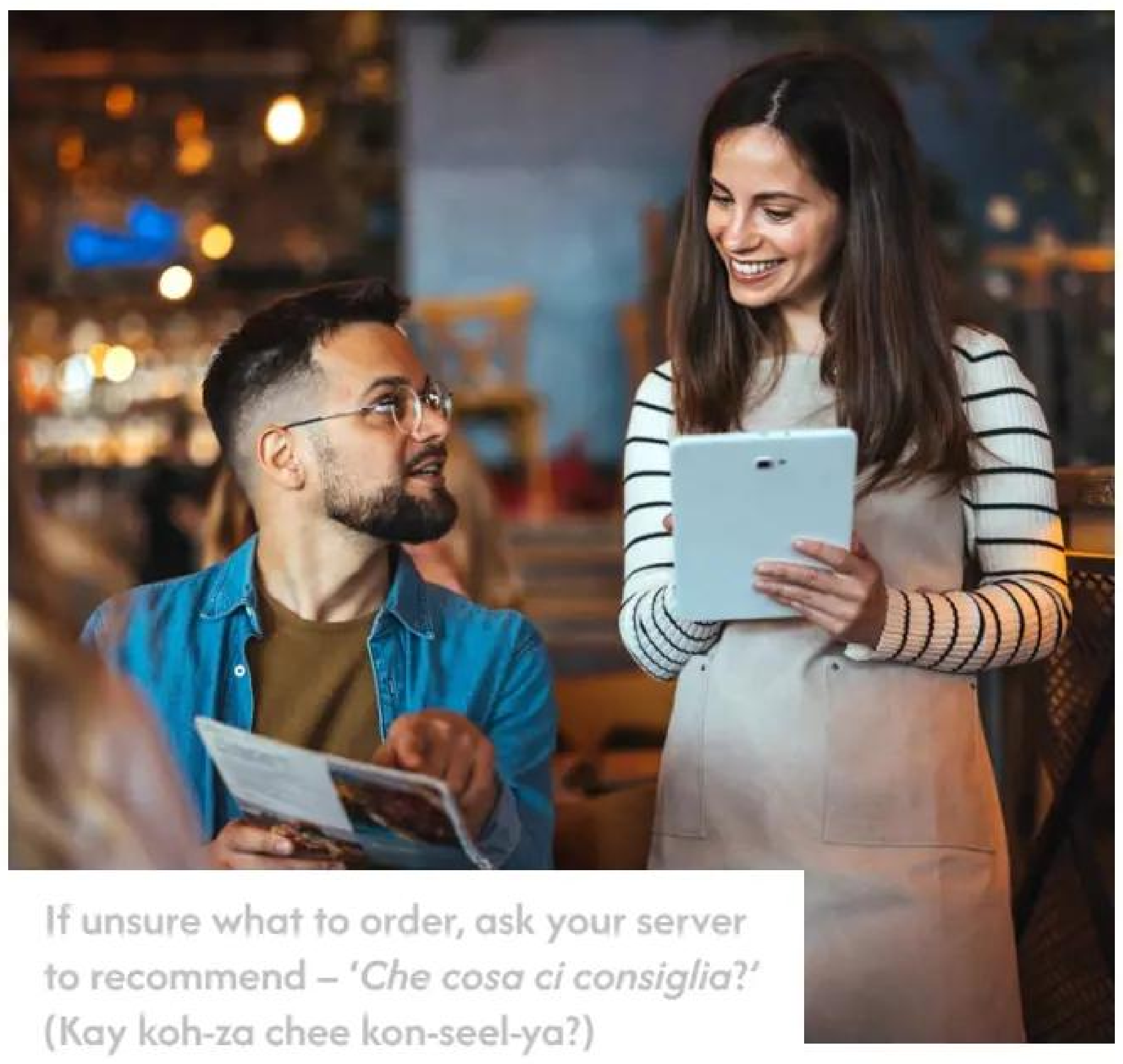
Polite everyday Italian phrases to help express yourself

PHRASE	HOW TO PRONOUNCE	MEANING
Buongiorno	*buon·giór·no*	Good morning, good day
Buonasera	*buon·ah·serah*	Good evening (after 4pm)
Buonanotte	*buon·na·nòt·te*	Good night (before bed)
Salve	*sàl·ve*	A polite way to say hello, a little more formal than ciao
Mi scusi	*Mee·scù·si*	A formal way of saying 'excuse me'
Mi dispiace	*mee·dees·pee·ah·che*	I'm sorry, or I regret
Che sorpresa!	*Keh·sor·preh·sah*	What a surprise!
Per favore/grazie	*pehrfah·voh·reh / grà·zie*	Please/thank you

When first meeting someone it is polite to say *'piacere'* (pyah-cheh-reh) – pleased to meet you



When ordering a gelato, ask for '*due gusti, per favore*' (doo-eh goo-stee, pehr fah-voh-reh) – two flavours please



If unsure what to order, ask your server to recommend – '*Che cosa ci consiglia?*' (Kay koh-za chee kon-seel-ya?)

It is customary to leave your wine glass almost full as an indicator that you have had sufficient

When engaging in conversation, best to avoid religion or politics, along with jokes or mention of the mafia

Aperitivo-o-clock is a time to be celebrated; however one too many Aperol spritzes is frowned upon

> DRESSING FOR THE OCCASION IS KEY: GYM CLOTHES BELONG IN THE GYM, IN THE SAME WAY AS BEACH WEAR SHOULD REMAIN ON THE BEACH

structured, often with numerous courses. Knowing what to choose, however, can be a minefield so opting for local specialities and regional dishes can be a little daunting. Asking for recommendations from your server is advised, or taking a look at what other guests are eating.

There are a few things to consider when dining in Italy, for example never combine Parmesan with seafood dishes or use it on pizza. Salads are not typically served with a meal but are instead eaten separately following a main course. Pasta should be twirled on your fork and never cut with a knife, spoons are only for the children, and tap water with a meal is not the done thing; either opt for bottled *frizzante* (sparkling) or *naturale* (still). Coffee comes separately and is served after the meal. *Aperitivo* comes before the meal and has its own pre-dinner hour, complete with delicious snacks.

Tipping etiquette varies in Italy from other countries in Europe; although it is not customary, it is appreciated and recommended when having received excellent service. Tipping is not to be confused with *coperto*, which is a charge made by the restaurant for items such as bread. Doggy bags are not something that happens in Italy.

SUITABLE DRESSWEAR

Known for their impeccable style and pride in their appearance, Italians will always arrive looking neat and well coordinated. Even their casual wear has a touch of elegance. Dressing for the occasion is key: gym clothes belong in the gym, in the same way as beach wear should remain on the beach. It is all about respect – when visiting historic or religious locations, knees and shoulders should be covered and appropriate foot and dresswear should be worn.

As one of the fashion capitals of the world all eyes are on Milan; however focusing on dressing well spans across the whole country and not just in the larger cities. It is an etiquette where Italians unite in making a good impression by dressing to impress, something that other Europeans and foreigners would no doubt like to emulate. Special focus is often on shoes; this is very important in Italian culture. The country is renowned for producing exceptionally beautiful high-quality handmade shoes that showcase some outstanding traditional craftsmanship. Hats too are a stylish way to accessorise an outfit and express individuality, just don't leave one on your bed as it is historically linked to death rituals. Donning purple when attending the opera is also not advised; however should you want to ward off misfortune and attract good luck, then wearing an item of clothing inside out is perfectly acceptable!

CELEBRATIONS AND THE ART OF GIFTING

Generally Italian birthdays are as you would expect: cake, family, gifts and a celebratory meal. The only difference is that the person whose birthday it is is the one who usually pays. Birthday cards are also not common, which means the only thing you need to do as an attendee is show up with a gift and enjoy the occasion.

Gifting is always a gesture that is greatly appreciated. On receipt a gift should be opened immediately in front of the person who has given it in order to thank them right away. Wrapping is a big deal in Italy with gifts beautifully presented and adorned. However, wrapping in purple or black is an absolute no as these are colours symbolising bad luck, grief or mourning. Giving a handkerchief as a present is also ill advised as it signifies tears. It is also deemed to be in poor taste to discuss how much was spent on the item.

Flowers are a powerful way to express emotion; however in Italy some flowers hold extra meaning. Red flowers, for example, symbolise secrecy or passion, yellow signifies jealousy and chrysanthemums are linked with death. It is worth taking the time to choose wisely before selecting a bouquet. Giving an even number of stems is also problematic as it is associated with funerals, so play it safe and stick to odd numbers, apart from 13 for obvious reasons.

You may find shopping in busier parts of Italy a little chaotic, for this reason some shops have had to introduce a ticketing system in order to streamline queues. When hitting the shops for a gift or some high-end fashion, common courtesy dictates that on public transport, pavements and other busy areas social etiquette is observed and people are spatially aware and step to the side or out of the way in order to allow others to pass.

With the etiquette rules mastered, you are all set for a flawless Italian adventure!

Images Getty Images

A TASTE

The world's most popular cuisine needs no long introductions. Delicious dishes like pizza and pasta have become ubiquitous, prepared across the globe every day in both home kitchens and all levels of eatery, from food truck to Michelin-starred restaurant. With adaptations to suit local tastes, over time the recipes on some modern menus (or dare we admit to it, supermarket ready meals!) are as far from what 'mama used to make' as they are geographically from their homeland. A visit to Italy, then, is the perfect opportunity to see, smell and – most importantly – taste the difference between the fare we've come to know as 'Italian' versus its OG inspiration. And it's not all about what you're consuming: for the full gastronomic experience, why not also take a 'when in Rome' approach to when and how you take your meals? It may not be possible to learn the language or history of Italy on a short vacation, but you can dine like a native from day one.

COLAZIONE 7-10AM
BREAKFAST

In some cultures, breakfast is heralded as the most important meal of the day, and as such there's a tendency to go big. Breaking the overnight fast can rapidly morph into multiple courses, including cold dishes like cereal, pastries, fruit and yoghurt, proceeded by toast and cooked favourites such as eggs, bacon and sausages. This isn't the case in Italy, however, where for many the concept of tucking into a huge feast at the start of the day is viewed as utter *follia* ('madness').

Most Italians prefer to begin on a much lighter note. This will comprise of a coffee (which is virtually obligatory, though tea is usually, grudgingly, available), accompanied by either a few small biscotti, a slice of toast and honey or a *cornetto* – a sweet croissant-style pastry filled with cream, chocolate or jam. It's worth remembering that if you take this mini meal while standing at the counter of a coffee bar (where you'll see most locals camped out), you'll tend to pay less – in some cases, by up to half – than if you sit at a table.

If you are determined to stick to local customs, milky coffees such as cappuccinos or lattes are only deemed acceptable up to about 11 am; order one after that and prepare to be met with a bemused look, an arched eyebrow or perhaps something more profane that you hopefully won't be able to translate! For Italians, from lunch onwards, it's all about quick shots of espresso and even these are only taken after a big meal to act as a digestive.

> “FOR THE FULL GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCE, WHY NOT ALSO TAKE A 'WHEN IN ROME' APPROACH TO WHEN AND HOW YOU TAKE YOUR MEALS?

PRANZO 12.30-2.30PM
LUNCH

Lunch is considered the most important meal of the day in Italy, so unless you're intending to grab something on the go like a *panino* or slice of pizza, it's generally advisable to avoid elevenses (or whatever you call mid-morning snacks). Expect at least two courses but, if going full traditional, it could be as many as four or five, so you'll want to set aside at least 60-90 minutes to do this meal justice.

Proceedings kick off with a starter (*antipasto*) – often a platter of bite-sized morsels such as salami, prosciutto, cheese and olives that the whole table can nibble at. An ever-replenished basket of fresh bread will be omnipresent; be wary of over-filling on bread if you arrive famished.

This is followed by the first main, a *primo* – these are usually something carb-based like a

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT Pasta al pesto | cornetti croissants | Aperol Spritz and antipasto | espresso and biscotti | cannoli | cianfotta

OF ITALY

OUR PASSION FOR ITALIAN FOOD SEEMS TO KNOW NO BOUNDS, BUT CAN ADOPTING THE NATION'S DINING HABITS OFFER A DEEPER INSIGHT INTO THIS LONG-TIME LOVE AFFAIR?

WORDS **ADAM MILLWARD**

BACK TO BASICS

Fine fare in Italy doesn't have to break the bank for those open to embracing *cucina casalinga*

One of the best things about Italian food is how delicious it can taste even in more humble settings. For a more authentic dining experience, leave behind the smartly dressed waiters and tables lining the main plaza and head into the side streets to seek out less flashy *trattoria* and *osteria*. Usually identifiable by hand-written menus on a board, simple wooden furniture and tables topped with paper, if Italian is the prevailing language in earshot, you know you're on to a winner. Many of these smaller eateries have been run by families for multiple generations, so it's common to see a respected nonna or papa perched in the kitchen keeping a close eye on proceedings. These establishments are bastions of homecooking (*cucina casalinga*), so don't expect mountains of truffle or extensive wine menus. What you can expect are hearty stews (such as *cacciatore*), pasta, salads and soups, all cooked with ingredients freshly bought from the local market and prepared using a wealth of long-honed family recipes.

Images Getty Images

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT
Wood-fired pizza |
spaghetti all'Assassina |
limoncello | panna cotta

THIS IS THE JOY OF ITALIAN GASTRONOMY: THERE ARE SO MANY VARIATIONS ON A THEME THAT YOU GET THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS BETWEEN FAMILIAR AND NOVEL

generous bowl of pasta, risotto or gnocchi, or perhaps a hearty soup. It's often these dishes where local regions stamp their own mark in terms of the type of pasta or the sauce. For instance, Genoa is revered for its classic pesto, Venice for its anchovy-rich bigoli in salsa and Lazio (location of Rome) for its carbonara (whatever you do, don't ask for cream in it!). There are plenty of lesser-known curveball recipes too, like *spaghetti all'Assassina* – a staple in the southern city of Bari – where the pasta isn't boiled but rather fried in the pan with a tomato-chilli sauce, giving it a charred, crunchy texture. This is the joy of Italian gastronomy: there are so many variations on a theme that you get the best of both worlds between familiar and novel.

Next up are the *secondi* – a follow-up main centred on a particular meat, fish or seafood, as well as egg-based recipes such as frittatas. These will almost always come with a *contorni* (a vegetable side dish or salad), which is often where you'll find more variety and the chance to be adventurous. Different regions again have their own specialities but usual suspects include fried aubergine, herby cannellini beans, stuffed artichokes, green bean salad and the ratatouille-like Mediterranean veg medley, *cianfotta*.

Not surprisingly after all that, desserts (if you can manage one) at lunchtime tend to be light – a particular favourite in summertime is the delightfully refreshing fruit salad *macedonia di frutta*, often served with a zingy lemon sorbet.

MERENDA 4-6PM
MID-AFTERNOON SNACK

If you skipped a big lunch, then you might need a *merenda* to keep you going till dinner. The most common dishes at this time of day serve as a pick-me-up, particularly for tired kids, or hangry tourists who've been on their feet exploring the sights all day. When in need of some sweet refreshment, ice cream always hits the spot – and, of course, Italy's extra-smooth and creamy gelato, available in dozens of flavours, is world famous; the most difficult thing is choosing which one to try first!

For an even bigger sugar hit, track down a local *panetteria* (bakery) to check out their doughnut selection: *bombolini* are bursting with vanilla-laden crème pâtissière, whereas *graffete* are the ring-shaped ones with no filling. All are made with a light, fluffy dough (typically with a bit of citrus peel running through) and smothered in sugar – perfect for anyone whose energy levels are flagging.

APERITIVO 6-8PM
PRE-DINNER DRINK

Perhaps no meal is more uniquely Italian than this pre-dinner course often enjoyed by friends after work, couples on a date or as a shared platter at a family get-together. Its origins date back to Ancient Rome, so its popularity has truly stood the test of time, though admittedly it has undergone some variations over the millennia. Nowadays it typically revolves around a cocktail (either alcoholic or non-alcoholic) that will get your tastebuds tingling and a light snack, both of which are designed to whet the appetite in preparation for the evening meal proper. Classic aperitif beverages lean into dry, low-alcohol spirits such as Aperol, gin and vermouth, though sweeter options are available, made long with a mixer like soda or tonic. Food wise, you can expect charcuterie meats, stuffed olives, loaded crostini, salted nuts and crudité vegetables – all flavour-packed titbits but like any good canapé, designed not to overfill.

CENA 8-10PM
DINNER

Technically the final meal of the day can follow the same structure as lunch and have as many courses. In reality – unless it's a special occasion – most Italians favour a more pared-back supper, especially if you've overdone it – as it can be all too easy to – at aperitivo! It's common then to eschew having a *primo* course and a *secondo* course and instead to plump for one or the other. Indeed, not to be forgotten, there's always the option of that

juggernaut of Italian cuisine: pizza. For all its glorious simplicity, there's a very good reason why travellers the world over hail pizza from its native home as superior: the thin, stretchy dough, a homemade base sauce bursting with flavour, the freshest of toppings and cooked with a slight char in a wood-fired oven – all these elements play their part in elevating a modest dish to heavenly heights.

Now is perhaps also the chance to indulge in the dessert you couldn't quite manage at lunch. The last section of the menu will likely contain some recurring entries wherever you are in Italy, among them beloved classics such as the silky set cream panna cotta with fruit, airy *zabaglione* custard with a boozy kick, ricotta-filled cannoli rolls and, of course, the nation's most popular pudding, tiramisu. As with many of Italy's culinary smash hits, there's a heated debate around where and when this coffee, sponge and mascarpone concoction originated, but one thing's for sure, it's the perfect way to round off a day of gorging on Italian culinary delights.

Maybe you'll have just enough space left to partake in a digestif espresso or something a little stronger – as with so many home-grown liqueurs like amaretto, limoncello, amaro and Frangelico, it would be rude not to have a night cap. After all, you have committed to following all the traditional Italian dining customs, so bottoms up and *salute*!

ITALIAN STREET FOOD

With so much culture and history to see, these delicious snacks are the perfect way to refuel on the go

ARANCINI

Originally a labourer's lunch from Sicily, these risotto balls coated in crispy breadcrumbs have seen a global explosion in recent years, so are now widely available across Italy.

PIADINA

Something of a cross between a pitta and a tortilla, these flatbreads originating from the Romagna region are the perfect lighter vehicle for your favourite sandwich fillings.

MOZZARELLA IN CARROZZA

Particularly associated with Campania, the simplicity of this fried cheesy sandwich belies its knockout comfort factor and flavour. A breadless variation goes by **mozzarella fritta**.

PANELLE

These moreish Sicilian chickpea pancakes are typically served as they come or sandwiched in a bread roll, a bit like a British chip butty.

SGAGLIOZZE

Originally from the city of Bari, but now synonymous with all of Puglia, these fried squares of polenta usually just come with a sprinkle of salt and sometimes a spicy dip.

PIZZA AL TAGLIO

When the prospect of a whole pizza is overwhelming, why not just grab a slice? Pizza-by-the-piece stands are particularly prevalent in Rome.

ZEPPOLE

For those with a sweeter tooth, try out these mini doughnut-style bites, commonly served with a generous dusting of sugar and cinnamon.

GELATO

For a midafternoon energy booster, a visit to a **gelateria** is as much a treat for the eyes as it is the tastebuds.

APERITIVO

This is the perfect way to start winding down in an evening, with some tasty appetizers and a refreshing drink like an Aperol Spritz to get you ready for dinner.

Images Getty Images

MARGHERI

RECREATE A CLASSIC NEAPOLITAN-STYLE PIZZA AT HOME, WITH OR WITHOUT A PIZZA OVEN

Makes	**4x 23cm | 9in pizzas**
Prep	**20 mins, plus proving time for the dough**
Cook	**7-9 mins (per pizza)**

INGREDIENTS

1 quantity of pizza dough (see below), shaped into 4 balls

250g | 9oz mozzarella or fior di latte, drained and torn into pieces

Chilli or garlic oil or chilli flakes, to serve (optional)

FOR THE PIZZA DOUGH:

500g | 1lb 00 pizza flour or strong white bread flour

¼ tsp instant dried yeast

1 tbsp fine salt

1 tbsp olive oil

Fine semolina flour or plain flour, for dusting

FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE:

Handful fresh basil leaves, chopped, plus a few extra leaves, to garnish

400g | 14oz tin good-quality whole plum tomatoes, drained (reserve the juice for another recipe)

Pinch of sugar

1 At least 1 day before you want to make your pizzas, put the flour, yeast and salt into a large mixing bowl. Add the oil and 350ml | 12fl oz tap water, then mix with clean hands to form a rough dough, scraping down the sides to make sure all the dry ingredients are incorporated. Cover the bowl and set aside at room temperature overnight or until the dough has doubled in size.

2 Tip the dough on to a well-floured surface and divide into 4. Shape each piece of dough into a ball, then cover with a clean, damp cloth and leave to rest for 1 hr on a floured surface.

3 Alternatively, put the dough balls on to a floured baking tray, wrap in cling film and chill for up to 3 days. Remove from the fridge about 2 hrs before shaping.

4 To shape the pizzas, put 1 ball of dough on to a lightly floured surface. Starting from the centre, use clean fingers to press and stretch the dough outwards into a flattened disc. Pick up the dough and pinch around the edges, letting gravity stretch the dough further, to the required size (a 23cm | 9in round pizza).

5 Heat the grill to high. For the tomato sauce, pulse the basil and tomatoes in a food processor until mostly smooth. Add the sugar and season with salt.

6 Place one pizza base into a 25cm | 10in cast iron frying pan. Spread 2-3tbsp of the tomato sauce over the pizza, then top with some of the mozzarella pieces.

7 Cook on the hob over a high heat for 2-3 mins, until the underside of the pizza is crisp and a little charred. Transfer to the hot grill and cook for a further 5-6 mins, until the cheese is melted and bubbling, and the edges of the pizza dough are puffed and charred in places.

8 Alternatively, cook in a pizza oven according to the manufacturer's instructions (about 1-2 mins), turning as needed, until puffed and a little charred.

9 Slide the pizza on to a plate or board, then top with a few fresh basil leaves. Slice and serve hot, with a drizzle of chilli or garlic oil, or a pinch of chilli flakes, if liked. Repeat with the remaining dough and toppings.

Recipes & food styling **Jess Meyer.**
Photo **Hannah Hughes.** Props Victoria Eldridge

TA PIZZA

BOLOGNESE

THIS MAKES A GREAT BUDGET-FRIENDLY CHANGE FROM A CLASSIC BOLOGNESE

TOP TIP

This sauce freezes really well.

Serves	4
Prep	10 mins
Cook	40 mins

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 red onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 500G | 18OZ pork mince
- 700G | 25OZ passata
- 300ML | 10FL OZ chicken stock
- 2 tbsp sun-dried tomato paste
- 2 tsp oregano or dried Italian herbs
- 350G | 12OZ large pasta shells

1 Heat the oil in a large pan, fry the onions for a few mins to soften. Add the garlic and carrot and cook for a couple more mins.

2 Stir in the pork mince, season generously and fry for 10 mins until well browned, turning as needed.

3 Pour in the passata, chicken stock, tomato paste and herbs, bring to the boil, cover and simmer for 20 mins until meat is tender.

4 Meanwhile, heat a large pan of boiling salted water and cook the pasta shells for about 12 mins, according to the instructions on the pack, until they are just tender.

5 Spoon the pork bolognese into the pasta shells to serve.

Compiled by Felicity Barnum-Bobb.
Photo Timeincukcontent.com

PARMIGIANA

AN ITALIAN ONE-POT DINNER THAT DELIVERS MAXIMUM FLAVOUR AND MINIMUM WASHING-UP – RESULT!

TOP TIP

Make ahead and cool completely, then chill. Reheat in the oven at 200°C/400°F/Gas 6 for 25-30 mins.

Serves	4
Prep	10 mins
Cook	40 mins

INGREDIENTS

3 aubergines, cut lengthways into 2cm | 0.75in thick slice

4 tbsp olive oil

2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

2x 400g | 14oz tins chopped tomatoes

1 tbsp dried oregano

Handful fresh basil, torn, plus extra to garnish

1 tbsp sun-dried tomato paste

Pinch caster sugar

400g | 14oz tin lentils, rinsed & drained

100g | 3.5oz Parmesan, grated

125g | 4.5oz mozzarella ball, torn

1 Heat the grill to medium. Lay the aubergine slices on 2 baking trays and brush with half the oil. Grill for 10 mins until golden brown, then turn and cook on the other side for a further 10 mins.

2 Meanwhile, for the Parmigiana, warm the remaining oil in a pan with the garlic for 1 min. Add the tomatoes, oregano, basil, tomato paste and sugar, and season. Simmer for 10 mins. Add the lentils to warm.

3 Layer the Parmigiana in a dish. Start with enough sauce to line the base of the dish, followed by some of the aubergine and Parmesan. Depending on the size of your dish, repeat, finishing with a layer of sauce and Parmesan.

4 Dot the mozzarella over the top and grill for 10 mins. Scatter a few basil leaves over the dish just before serving.

Compiled by Jen Bedloe. Recipe & Photos Futurecontenthub.com

BRUSCHETTA

THIS CLASSIC APPETISER OR SNACK IS EASY TO MAKE SERVED WITH A SPARKLING LIMONCELLO REFRESHER

TOP TIP

If you have juicy tomatoes, pat with kitchen paper.

Serves	**6**
Prep	**20 mins**
Cook	**4-6 mins**

INGREDIENTS

6 large ripe plum tomatoes

1 large ciabatta, cut into 12 slices on the angle

3 garlic cloves, halved

12 basil leaves, roughly torn

2 tbsp fruity extra virgin olive oil

FOR THE LIMONCELLO

200ml | 7fl oz limoncello

Mint, few sprigs

Basil, few sprigs

1 lemon, sliced

½ orange, sliced

4 tbsp caster sugar

200ml | 7fl oz Prosecco

1 Halve the tomatoes, remove all the seeds and dice into 1cm| ½in cubes, season with salt and pepper and set aside.

2 Grill the ciabatta to golden brown on both sides. While the bread is still hot, rub one side of each slice with the cut garlic. Place the slices on a wooden board, top with the diced tomato, scatter over the basil leaves and drizzle with the olive oil. Serve immediately.

3 In a large jug half-filled with ice, mix the limoncello with the mint and basil, and the lemon and orange slices. Dissolve the sugar in 100ml | 3fl oz boiling water, allow to cool and stir in. Top up with Prosecco and serve.

Recipe Phil Mundy.
Photo Maja Smend, Gus Filgatee

TIRAMISU

THE MASCARPONE AND WHISKED EGGS GIVE AN AUTHENTIC RICHNESS

Serves	**6**
Prep	**30 mins, plus chilling**

INGREDIENTS

400ml | 14fl oz hot strong espresso coffee

50ml | 2fl oz rum or Amaretto

150g | 5oz golden caster sugar

200g | 7oz Savoiardi sponge fingers

3 eggs, separated

500g | 1lb mascarpone, at room temperature

100ml | 3½fl oz Marsala

50g | 2oz cocoa powder, sifted

50g | 2oz dark chocolate, finely grated

1 Pour the coffee into a small bowl and stir in the rum or Amaretto and 50g | 2oz of the caster sugar. Divide the sponge fingers into 2 batches. Taking 1 batch, dip each finger briefly into the coffee mixture, turning to coat, then put straight into the individual glasses or large dish, to form a base layer.

2 Using electric beaters, whisk the egg yolks with the remaining caster sugar for 10 mins, until thick and pale. Fold in the mascarpone, a spoonful at a time, until incorporated, then swiftly whisk in the Marsala, trying not to lose any volume.

3 In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites until stiff. Fold the mascarpone mixture into the egg whites.

4 Spoon half the mascarpone mixture over the sponge fingers in the individual glasses or large dish, then lightly dust with half the cocoa powder. Repeat the layers using the second batch of sponge fingers dipped in the coffee mixture, and then the mascarpone. Finish with a dusting of cocoa powder and a layer of finely grated dark chocolate. Chill for at least 6 hrs or overnight before serving.

TOP TIP

You will need 6 individual serving glasses or 1 large serving dish.

Compiled by Keiron George.
Recipe & photo Futurecontenthub.com

GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

GEN UP ON ITALIAN VINO BEFORE YOUR TRIP WITH OUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE NATION'S DIVERSE WINE REGIONS

WORDS **ADAM MILLWARD**

If Italy's culinary delights weren't enough to have you booking a holiday, its long history of viniculture is just as big a draw for wine lovers. Even if not a wine buff, you might be surprised by just how many of the most-loved varieties you recognise that originate from this Old World powerhouse. The stunning array of wines produced here is made possible thanks to the temperate climate with plenty of sunshine, but also varied topography and soil types that lend themselves to different grapes. With roots that date back more than 2,000 years, it's little wonder that this nation has mastered the art of winemaking – here we spotlight a few of its most prestigious wine areas.

TUSCANY

When most people picture a vineyard in Italy, it's most likely a scene of the rolling hills of Tuscany bathed in amber sunset rays that the mind's eye conjures. This region is a bastion of the Sangiovese grape, which gives us that most famed of Italian reds – Chianti. This has been made here since at least the 13th century. The same grape is also the core of Brunello di Montalcino, with its plum and spice notes – and like Chianti is protected by the government's strict DOCG regulations for quality control. A Tuscan white not to be missed is Vernaccia di San Gimignano – a golden-coloured dry wine whose flavour profile becomes more complex with herbal and savoury notes as it matures.

VENETO

This region is often eclipsed by its star city, Venice, but canals are hardly conducive to viniculture. Head inland and you'll find one of the country's most varied wine selections – and also one of the most lucrative. Glera grapes thrive here; a key constituent of Prosecco, which has seen such a boom in recent years that it's now Italy's biggest wine export, and consistently outsells Champagne (sorry, France!). If not a fan of bubbles, Veneto can offer its Soave whites, with peach and almond undertones, or head to the hills between Verona and Lake Garda for Valpolicella and Amarone, world-famous reds that punch with dark fruit like plum and cherry, then linger with cocoa and spices.

SICILY

Wines from Italy's largest island have seen something of a meteoric (or should that be volcanic?) rise in the 21st century. The rich soil and higher terrain provided on the slopes of the still-active Etna volcano provide ideal conditions for grape cultivation and ever-more refined blends – often letting indigenous varieties such as Nerello Mascalese take the leading role. Sicily has so far been finding the most success with reds like Nero d'Avola – likened to New World Shiraz – but wineries' lighter offerings are now gaining traction too, with Etna Bianco – defined by its refreshing hints of citrus, mint and salt – leading the white-wine vanguard.

PIEDMONT

Abutting the Alps in the north-west of Italy, this region can boast more DOCG wines that any other in the country – a source of great pride to the Piedmontese. It's renowned for its Nebbiolo black grape, which gets its name from the fog (*nebbia*) that often cloaks these lofty vineyards in harvest season. It's the main variety that goes into perennially popular full-bodied, velvety reds such as Barolo and Barbaresco. For something a touch lighter, Piedmont boasts Asti sparkling wines, rivalling Veneto's Prosecco. Asti has a more mellow fizz and an aromatic profile zinging with fruit and honey, derived predominantly from Moscato grapes.

> PROSECCO HAS SEEN SUCH A BOOM IN RECENT YEARS THAT IT'S NOW ITALY'S BIGGEST WINE EXPORT AND CONSISTENTLY OUTSELLS CHAMPAGNE

EMILIA-ROMAGNA

Since its 1970s heyday, just uttering the name 'Lambrusco' has had wine aficionados scrunching up their noses in distaste, as it became synonymous with cheap, sweet fizz (indeed, some even called it 'Italian Coca-Cola'!). But that is no longer the case. In recent times, the wine producers of this north-central region have been on a mission to re-envision their long-maligned product. The subsequent Lambrusco revival has resulted in a plethora of sparkling wines of all hues that are being celebrated for depth and complexity, with their fruity and acidic effervescence lending itself to a wide range of different foods, from tomato-based pastas and pizza, all the way to cured meats and cheese.

ENDING ON A SWEET NOTE

For something different, how about a wine that doubles up as a pudding? Vin Santo ('sacred wine'), as you'd expect of a dessert wine, is extremely sweet, redolent with honey and apricot, and syrupy in texture. In its native home of Tuscany, it's traditionally served after dinner with crunchy biscotti – particularly *cantucci* crammed with almonds and pistachios – resulting in a heady blend of caramel, fruit and nut aromas as the biscuits are dipped (and softened) in the amber liquid. Vin Santo obtains its distinct super-saccharine profile through the Malvasia and Trebbiano grapes being left to dry on straw mats post-harvest, a process that intensifies the fruit's natural sugars.

Images Getty Images

SPIRITUALITY MEETS SECULARISM

JOIN US ON A PILGRIMAGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT TO DISCOVER HOW DEEPLY RELIGION IS INTERTWINED WITH THE ITALIAN WAY OF LIFE

WORDS **REBECCA BRADBURY**

The religious landscape in Italy is as rich and interesting as its cuisine and culture. Having dominated the historical and social fabric of the country for centuries, Roman Catholicism remains the nation's number one religion. Yet as a secular democracy, the Italian state's relationship with the Church is often fraught, constantly complex and forever evolving.

For most Italians, Catholicism is inescapable, from deep cultural ties impacting religious holidays and customs to the physical presence of churches – there are over 900 in Rome alone. For visitors, this means encountering stunning places of worship and participating in colourful cultural events with religious roots.

FROM POLYTHEISM TO MONOTHEISM

Eighty per cent of Italians might identify as Roman Catholic today, but religion took on a very different form in Rome 2,000 years ago. Rather than believing in just one god, the Romans worshipped multiple deities. You've probably heard of some of these gods and goddesses. Among the most revered were Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, and the Ancient Romans would perform rituals at temples and household altars in order to keep the gods in their favour.

But by 49 CE, Christianity had begun to emerge and would soon spread across the whole empire. By the late 4th century, Emperor Theodosius I had banned pagan worship and declared Christianity as the official state religion.

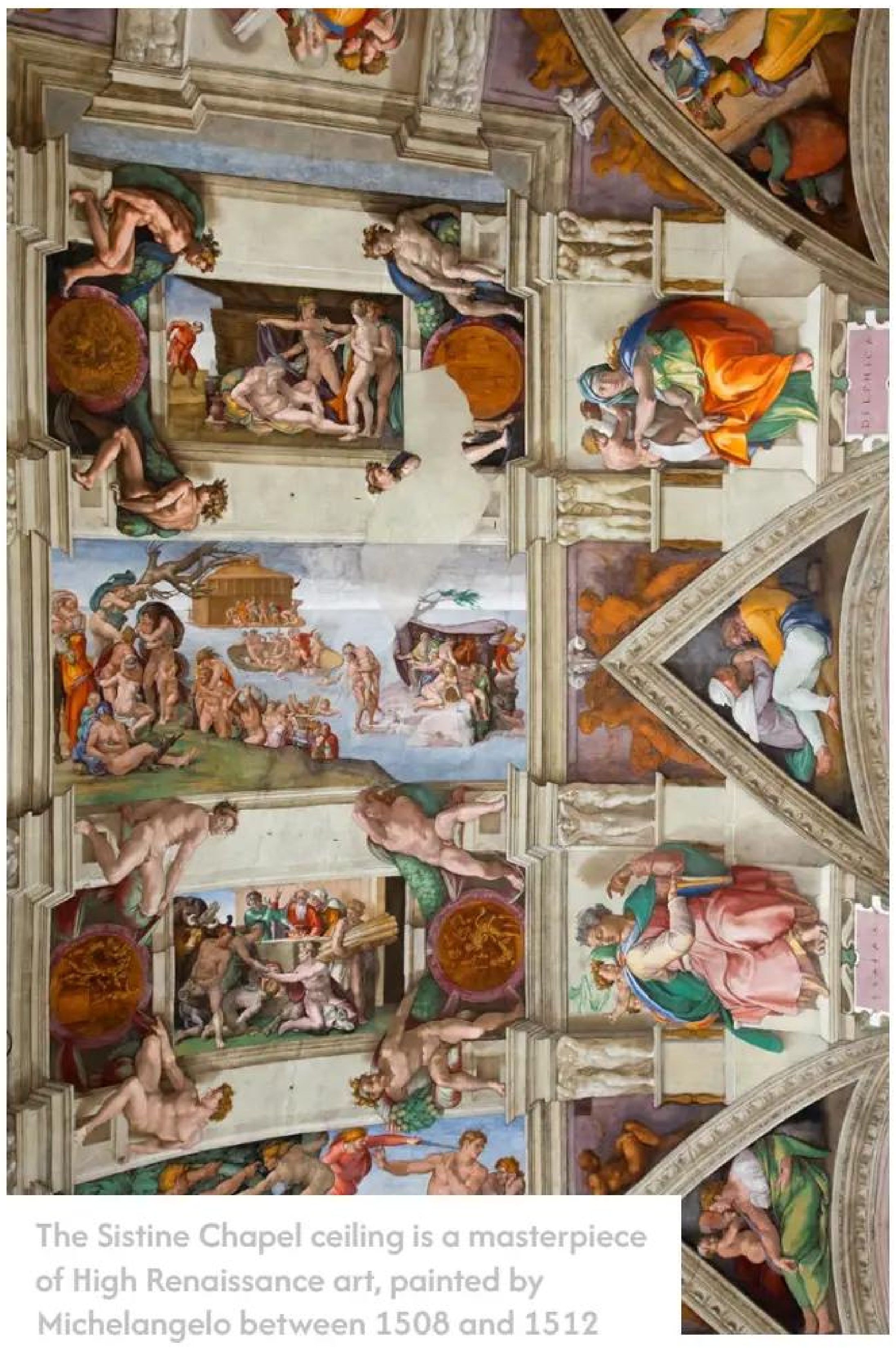
Around 200 years later in 590 CE, Roman Catholicism (a branch of Christianity) is thought to have officially started. Under Pope Gregory I, lands in his control were consolidated into what would in the 8th century become the Papal States – a collection of Italian territories ruled by the pope and Catholic Church.

THE ROMAN QUESTION

The unification of Italy in 1870 marked the end of the Papal States. It was seen as a direct challenge to the pope's temporal power and the Church refused to recognise the legitimacy of the Italian state. This led to a dispute known as the 'Roman Question': how to unify church and state?

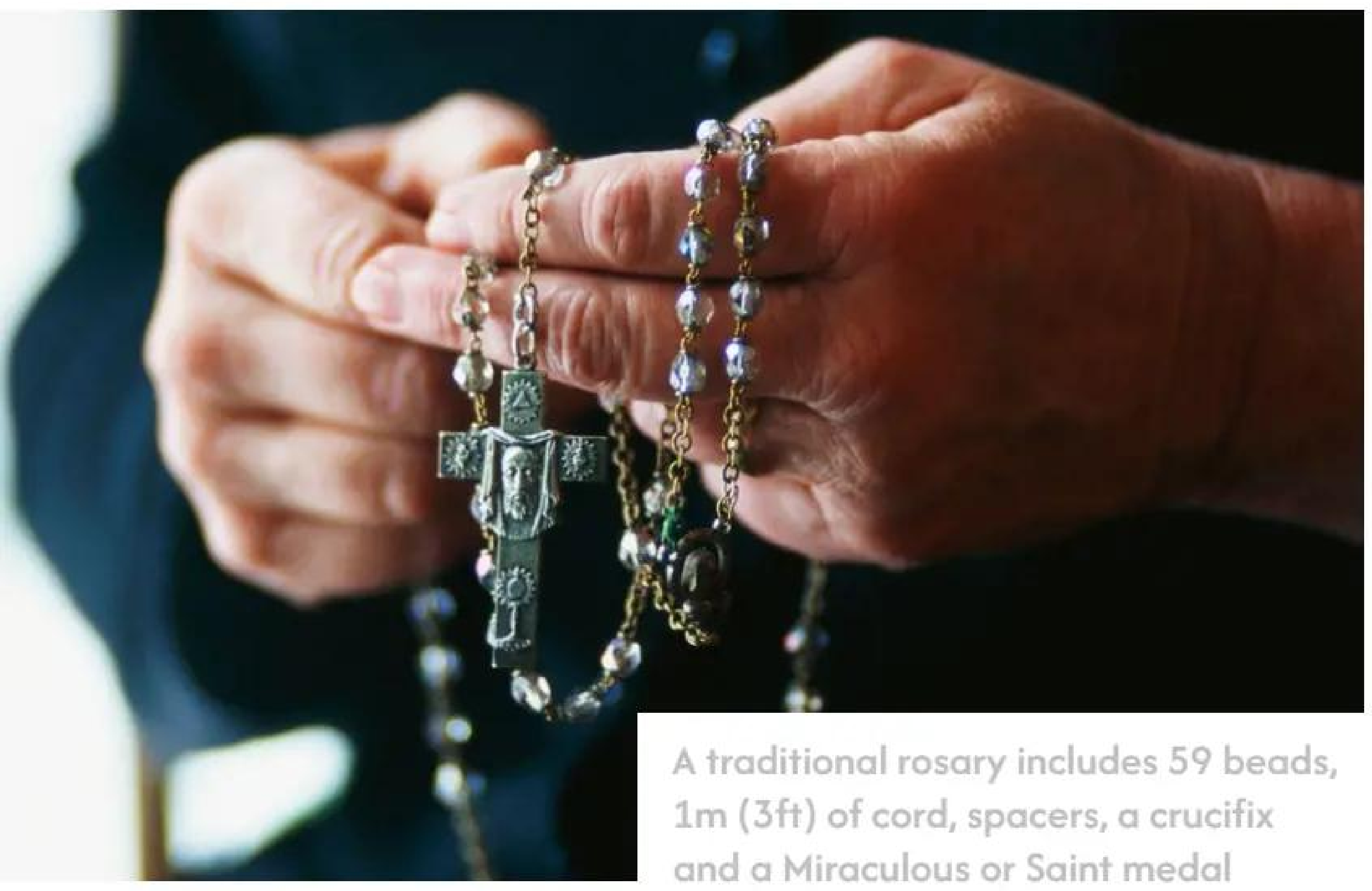
A solution came when the Lateran Treaty, led by Mussolini, was signed in 1929,

Pope Leo XIV was elected on 8 May 2025. Here he celebrates the Jubilee Mass at the Vatican



The Sistine Chapel ceiling is a masterpiece of High Renaissance art, painted by Michelangelo between 1508 and 1512

> “NO TRIP TO ROME WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT A VISIT TO THE VATICAN CITY – HOME TO THE POPE AND HEADQUARTERS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



A traditional rosary includes 59 beads, 1m (3ft) of cord, spacers, a crucifix and a Miraculous or Saint medal

MANCINELLI
89
90
CLERO

Italy has been the location for Catholic religious orders, including nuns

The ruins of the Temple of the Capitoline Triad, dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, still stands in Pompeii

establishing the Vatican City as a sovereign state with the pope as its absolute monarch.

While the territorial dispute was settled, the ‘Roman Question’ today refers to the broader relationship between the Church and the Italian state. A revision of the Lateran Treaty in 1984 even removed the clause that designated Catholicism as the state religion, but the Church still holds significant influence over Italian politics, society and culture.

CATHOLICISM VERSUS SECULARISM

In Italy today, the Church’s stance on some societal issues clash with a growing liberal population. For example, the Vatican condemns euthanasia, divorce, same-sex marriage and abortion, while secular forces advocate for these rights. Arguments also arise over how big a role Catholicism should play in education, as well as whether taxpayer money should subsidise the Vatican. However, the Pope holds an inclusive approach to immigration, which clashes with the right-wing government.

Religion is still very much in play among Italians, no matter what their political outlook. Recent statistics might reveal only 27 per cent of Italians attend mass at church on a weekly basis, but major life events, such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals, often retain Catholic traditions. Christian holidays, including Christmas and Easter, are celebrated with vibrant rituals and communal festivities.

The country’s right to religious freedom is also reflected in the practice of other religions, including Protestantism, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

CATHOLIC CUSTOMS

Religious symbols, such as icons of saints, images of the Virgin Mary and crucifixes, are displayed throughout the home. Crucifixes are worn as jewellery too, while household shrines are dedicated to religious figures.

Christian holidays are also celebrated at home and are very family orientated. Christmas begins with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December. Then on Christmas Eve, families abstain from meat and eat a seafood meal instead before heading out to midnight mass. There’s also Epiphany on 6 January, which celebrates the visit of the three wise men to baby Jesus.

At Easter, traditions include placing palm leaves and olive branches around the home on Palm Sunday, and enjoying large, elaborate family meals together.

Practicing Catholics in Italy usually attend mass every Sunday. A central part of their worship, the church service centres around the Eucharist, where bread and wine are consecrated and believed to become the body and blood of Christ. Prayer – often accompanied by rosary beads – the confession of sins, fasting during Lent and making the sign of the cross upon entering a church are also common Catholic rituals.

RELIGION AND THE COMMUNITY

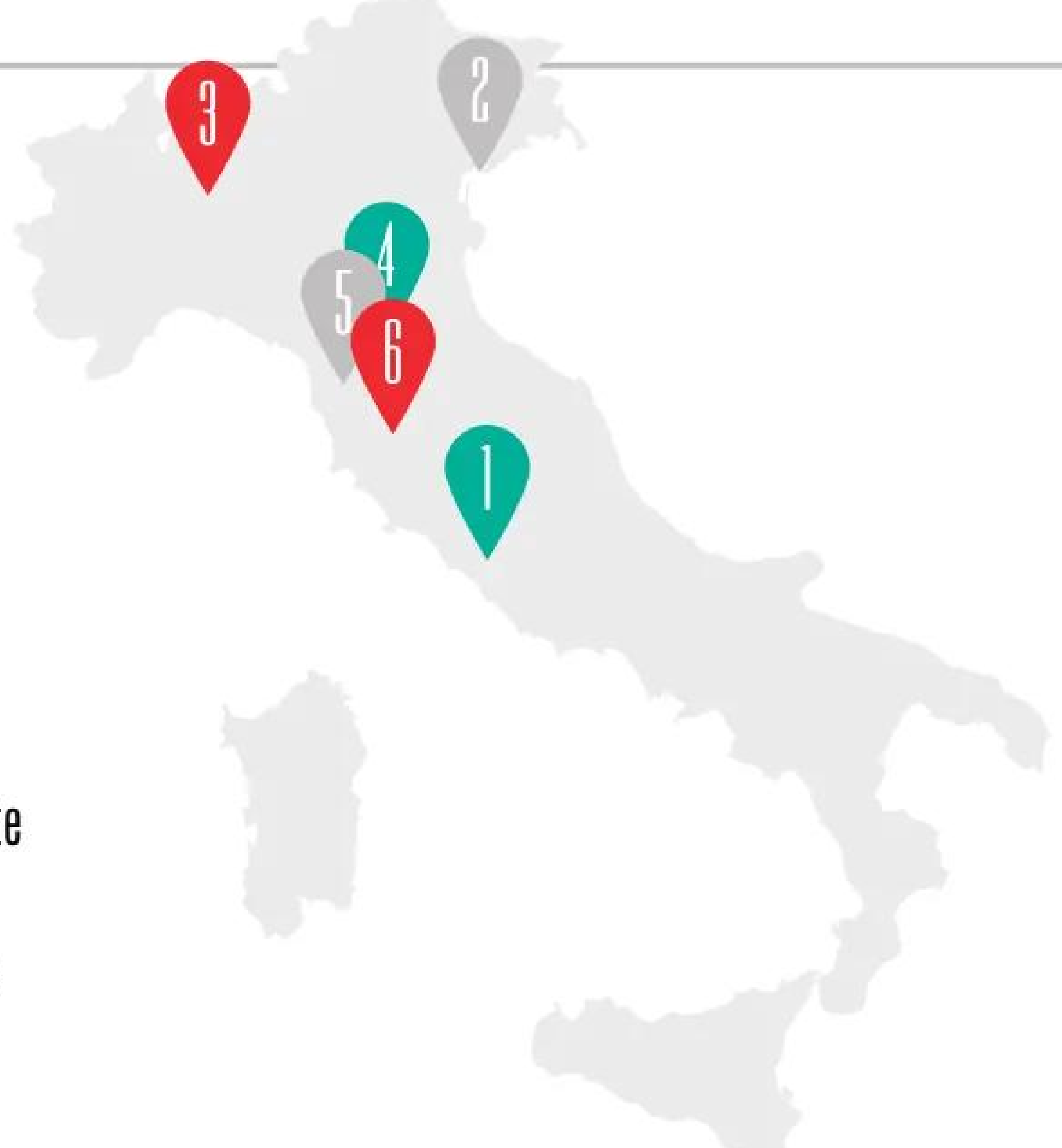
Despite the focus being on the family during Christmas and Easter, celebrations also take place within the community. This means visitors can join in with different religious festivities for a unique cultural experience.

Nativity scenes, Christmas lights and markets abound throughout December, while Easter and feast days of saints are marked by processions, festivities and special food. There are also public holidays on 15 August to celebrate the Assumption of Mary and All Saints’ Day in November to honour all the saints of the church. The best place to be for Pentecost, meanwhile, is outside the Pantheon in Rome, where a beautiful shower of rose petals is released.

Of course, a highlight of any trip to Italy is checking out the stunning architecture and interiors of the country’s inimitable selection of cathedrals.

SIX OF ITALY’S BEST CATHEDRALS

Italy wows with its architectural wonders, including a variety of showstopping places of worship



1 BASILICA DI SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE, ROME

This site is known for its shimmering mosaics and marble floors. Legend credits a miraculous August snowfall for its founding spot, adding an unexpected twist to its rich history. There are also relics believed to be from the Holy Crib, as well as intricate artworks to admire.

2 BASILICA DI SAN MARCO, VENICE

A stunning example of Byzantine architecture, this showstopper is famous for its golden mosaics, gem-studded altar panel and idyllic canal setting. It was founded in the 9th century to house the corpse of St Mark smuggled out of Egypt in a barrel of pork fat, a story depicted in one of the cathedral’s 1660 mosaics.

3 DUOMO DI MILANO, MILAN

This magnificent example of Gothic architecture took nearly 600 years to craft. But the wait was worth it with an intricate spire and thousands of elaborate marble carvings adorning the interior and exterior. Visitors can climb the spire to stroll among the statues and get a rooftop look at Milan’s modern skyline.

4 CATHEDRAL OF SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE, FLORENCE

Florence’s cathedral is an engineering marvel thanks to Brunelleschi’s Dome, which happens to be the largest dome built with bricks in the world. It’s possible to climb between the inner and outer shells of said dome, to get a closer look at Vasari’s frescoes and enjoy panoramic views.

5 DUOMO SAN GIMIGNANO, SAN GIMIGNANO

With a cluster of medieval towers rising above the Tuscan landscape, the Duomo San Gimignano is a beautiful sight. Standing atop a broad flight of stairs, the cathedral’s façade is Romanesque and travertine in style, while inside the walls are covered by a cycle of frescos depicting bible stories.

6 SIENA CATHEDRAL, SIENA

One of the most impressive Romanesque-Gothic churches in Italy, prepare to be spellbound by a façade of white and red Siena marble. The treasures continue inside, with a black-and-white striped interior and artistic masterpieces, including four sculptures by Michelangelo and Donatello’s 1438 sculpture of Saint John the Baptist.

Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence

Images Getty Images

SPORT IN ITALY

AS A FAMOUSLY PASSIONATE PEOPLE, ITALIANS ARE AMONG THE VERY BEST IN THE COMPETITIVE WORLD OF SPORT, INCLUDING A SURPRISING OLYMPIC DISCIPLINE...

WORDS JAMIE FRIER

What do you get if you mix a temperate climate, a healthy diet and an intensely spirited and fiery population? A country that is perfectly set up for success in sports, that's what. Italy has a rich tradition and heritage in multiple pursuits, such as football, cycling or motorsports. If there's competition to be had, you know that an Italian will be desperate to claim victory. Here are some of the sports in which Italy has historically excelled.

Italy's fourth World Cup triumph came in 2006, marking them out as one of the world's most successful football sides

FOOTBALL

You think of Italian sport, you probably think of football. The Italian national team is one of the most successful in history, having won the FIFA World Cup four times, with only Brazil being more successful. They won the second edition of the competition on home turf in 1934, before retaining the trophy in France four years later, the only country to do so. They won again in 1982, before claiming an astonishing title in 2006, a victory over France on penalties in the shadow of a huge domestic match-fixing scandal that had seen Juventus, AC Milan, Fiorentina and Lazio punished, the former by relegation to Serie B.

The Azzurri have been fortunate to have many of the world's best footballers playing in that famous blue strip. When Brazil legend Pelé was asked to choose the 100 greatest footballers in history in 2004, he chose 14 Italians, including the likes of Gianluigi Buffon, Paolo Maldini, Alessandro Nesta, Franco Baresi, and Francesco Totti. Only Brazil had more players in that list, showing how dominant Italy has been over the decades. That success has been built on one of the most iconic styles of play in world football. Pep Guardiola has tiki taka, Arthur Rowe had push and run, the Italians have *catenaccio*, which is characterised by defensive solidity and slow, methodical build up. This style made Italy historically very difficult to beat, which is ideal for tournament football.

Italy's club sides are no slouches either. AC Milan are one of the most successful teams in Europe, with seven European Cups/Champions Leagues, while Internazionale and Juventus have three and two respectively. Italy, along with Spain and England, are way ahead of the rest in terms of European trophies won, and achieved a unique first in 1990 by completing a clean sweep of trophies; AC Milan winning the European Cup, Sampdoria claiming the Cup Winners' Cup and Juventus beating Fiorentina to the UEFA Cup. Italian teams dominated the transfer market in the 90s too, responsible for nine of the 11 times the world transfer record was broken between Napoli's 1984 purchase of Diego Maradona and Hernan Crespo's move to Lazio in 2000. No matter where you look, Italy and football go together like Italy and pasta.

RUGBY

Rugby came to Italy in the late 19th century, but it took a while for the country to embrace it – the first club formed in 1909, the Italian Rugby Federation formed in 1928 and the first international game, against Spain, a year later. Italy has qualified for every Rugby World Cup since its inception in 1987, but the big leap forward came in 2000 when it joined England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France in the Five Nations, to create the Six Nations tournament. Unlike football, Italy has traditionally struggled against the rugby powerhouses, finishing bottom in their first three seasons and taking seven years to register two wins in a single competition.

CYCLING

Given its rugged, mountainous terrain, it's little wonder that Italy has a rich tradition in cycling. The Giro d'Italia is an annual race that was first run in 1909 as part of an advertising campaign for Italian newspaper *La Gazzetta della Sport*. It now forms one-third of the Grand Tours, along with the Tour de France and Vuelta de Espana, and the Triple Crown, alongside Le Tour again and the World Road Cycling Championships. This shows how highly-regarded Italy's cycling pedigree is. Alfredo Binda and Fausto Coppi are the joint-most successful riders in the Giro, while Gino Bartali jointly holds the record for most King of the Mountains titles across the Grand Tours.

TENNIS

Italy has surprisingly few players at the very top of the game. Jannik Sinner became the first Italian man to top the ATP rankings in June 2024, while the first Italian woman to win a Grand Slam title was Francesca Schiavone in 2010. However, Italy retains a major place on the international tennis calendar, with Rome hosting one of the year's biggest clay court events. Italy has historically had a better record in team events, winning the men's Davis Cup in 1976, as well as back-to-back titles in 2023 and 2024. It has had great success in the women's Fed Cup, winning four times between 2006-13 as well as a double success in 2024. Italian tennis is very much on the up.

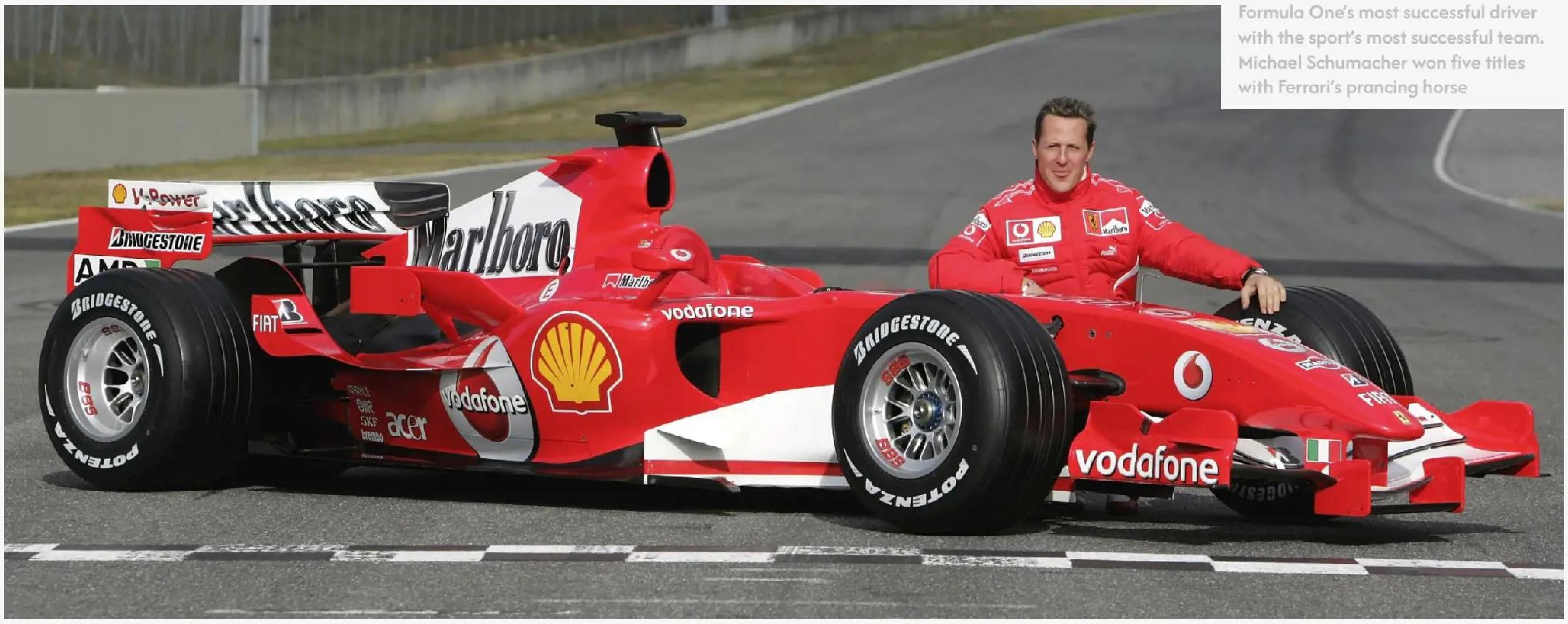
OLYMPICS

Italy has competed at every Summer and Winter Olympic games bar one – the 1904 St Louis Games – and is one of the top performing nations, seventh on the all-time medal table. A major driver of that place in the medal table, somewhat surprisingly, is fencing. Italy has more fencing medals than any other nation and its medal tally in that discipline, currently standing at 125. Thirteen of those were won by Edoardo Mangiarotti, Italy's most successful Olympian. The country's second-most successful discipline is athletics, aided by the surprise 100m gold for Lamont Jacobs at Tokyo 2020. Italy has hosted the Summer Games just once – the 17th Olympiad in Rome where home support helped it win the third-most golds behind the USSR and USA – but has hosted the Winter Games more often, where it is historically successful in the Alpine and Cross-Country skiing categories.

> WHEN BRAZIL LEGEND PELÉ WAS ASKED TO CHOOSE THE 100 GREATEST FOOTBALLERS IN HISTORY, HE CHOSE 14 ITALIANS

MOTORSPORTS

Formula One has had many icons over the years. Think the Monaco Grand Prix, think Michael Schumacher, think Senna v Prost. But the one that dominates above all others is the prancing horse – Ferrari. Italians are intrinsically linked with Formula One and have been from the very start. Italian Nino Farina won the first race and the first Championship in an Italian Alfa Romeo all the way back in 1950, while Ferrari is both the most successful team and the only one to take part in every season of the competition's existence. The lure of the red livery and passionate *tifosi* (fans) has attracted many of the best names in F1; Alberto Ascari, Juan-Manuel Fangio, Niki Lauda, Gilles Villeneuve, Alain Prost, Fernando Alonso and, of course, F1's most successful duo, Michael Schumacher and Lewis Hamilton. The Italian Grand Prix is a regular fixture on the F1 calendar, with Imola and Monza two of the most historic racetracks. Away from F1, Valentino Rossi is an Italian sporting hero on two wheels, having won World Championships at 125cc, 250cc, 500cc and MotoGP level, the most successful rider in the latter competition.



Formula One's most successful driver with the sport's most successful team. Michael Schumacher won five titles with Ferrari's prancing horse

Images Getty Images

Marlon Brando's character Vito Andolini in *The Godfather* comes from the Sicilian village of Corleone

THE CRIMES, CULTURE & COMPLEXITY OF THE ITALIAN 'MAFIA'

BEHIND THE MYTHS, MOVIES AND MURDERS LIES THE TRUE STORY OF ITALY'S MAFIA – VIOLENT, ENTRENCHED AND STILL PRESENT IN MODERN LIFE. BUT FOR HOW LONG?

WORDS **STEVE CHARNOCK**

Whenever the word 'mafia' is uttered, it tends to conjure up familiar images of sharp suits, whispered conversations in murky back rooms and the haunting strains of a mandolin-propelled soundtrack. Thanks to decades of films, books and television shows, the idea of the Italian mafia has become a global cultural shorthand for shadowy glamour and underworld honour codes. But behind the cinematic legacy lies a far more troubling truth...

NOT ONE, BUT MANY

The mafia isn't just one group. It's a tight-knit network of deeply rooted, highly organised criminal syndicates that continue to operate in modern-day Italy. Their influence stretches far beyond Sicily's sun-baked hills or Naples' crowded back streets, though. Nationally and internationally, these groups have left a deep imprint on Italian society. And their story is inseparable from Bel Paese's own.

> THE MAFIA ISN'T A CODE-BOUND FRATERNITY. IT'S A VIOLENT, PARASITIC FORCE THAT THRIVES ON FEAR, INTIMIDATION AND SILENCE

In Italy, the word 'mafia' isn't just shorthand for organised crime. It speaks of a deeply embedded system of power, loyalty and fear. One that goes beyond mere criminality. While most folk outside the country associate the mafia solely with La Cosa Nostra, the term actually covers several powerful criminal organisations that control territory, exploit economies and operate beyond Italian borders.

The three most prominent groups are the aforementioned Cosa Nostra in Sicily, the Camorra based in Naples and Campania, and the 'Ndrangheta from Calabria. Each has its own structure, culture, rituals and areas of influence, but they all share common traits: a code of silence (*omertà*), blood ties, a penchant for violence, in addition to exerting control over the local communities.

Some of these groups date back to the 19th century, and while exact numbers are elusive, estimates suggest Italy's mafias each involved tens of thousands of people at their peak. They're no relic, however. Today, Italy's anti-mafia agency believes the 'Ndrangheta has more than 6,000 affiliates in southern Italy, with thousands more internationally.

FROM COUNTRYSIDE CLANS TO FELONIOUS FEDERATIONS

Italy's various mafia groups didn't begin life as international criminal empires. Their roots often lie in the countryside, where in the 19th century they emerged as unofficial enforcers of local order in the absence of any reliable state authority. In rural Sicily, landowners paid ragtag Cosa Nostra clans to protect their estates. Or, more often, to avoid having them attacked. In Calabria, the 'Ndrangheta formed in closely integrated villages, enforcing clan loyalty above all else. The Camorra, the oldest of the three, traces its lineage back to the prison gangs of 18th-century Naples.

Over time, these groups evolved from local strongmen into complex criminal syndicates. The post-war years, especially during Italy's economic boom in the 1950s and 60s, gave the gangs a fresh lease of life. With the state investing in rebuilding infrastructure after WWII, mafia clans infiltrated the construction industry, laundered money through legitimate businesses and expanded their reach into politics and public contracts. Their power was no longer confined to the countryside; it had become urban. Systemic, even.

THE CRIMES AND THEIR IMPACT

The mafias of Italy became involved in almost every facet of organised crime imaginable. From murder, drug and human trafficking and arms smuggling, to illegal waste disposal, loan sharking, money laundering and counterfeiting. While international headlines often focus on major drug routes, killings and arrests, it's their grip on local economies that leaves the deepest scars.

In southern Italy in particular, mafia groups have long operated as almost parallel states – collecting protection money (*pizzo*), rigging public tenders and intimidating those who resist them. The result is a cycle of underdevelopment: legitimate investment is discouraged, small businesses are squeezed, unemployment remains high and talented young people are often forced to leave in search of better prospects.

A 2021 study by Italian trade body Confcommercio estimated that organised crime costs the country's economy more than €100 billion annually. And while the south suffers the most visible effects, mafia influence has been found in sectors from Milan's construction industry to Rome's waste contracts. The damage, in short, is national.

THE CULTURAL MYTHS THAT MUDDY THE WATERS

The mafia has left its mark not only on Italy's economy and politics, but also on its cultural identity – and, perhaps more powerfully, on how the world sees Italy. Decades of films, TV dramas and books have helped mythologise the mafia, often blurring the line between fact and fiction.

In Italian cinema, directors like Francesco Rosi (*Salvatore Giuliano*, *Lucky Luciano*) and Marco Tullio Giordana (*Lea*, *One Hundred Steps*) have tackled the mafia head-on, portraying the brutality and moral cost of life under criminal rule. The long-running TV drama *Gomorrah*, based on Roberto Saviano's bestselling exposé of the Neapolitan Camorra, earned global acclaim for its raw, unsentimental take on organised crime – far removed from any romanticised notions of honour among thieves.

But internationally, it's the Italian-American mafia that dominates the cultural landscape. *The Godfather* trilogy, Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* and *Casino*, and HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* and *The Sopranos* have helped create a powerful – and often seductive – image of mafia life. These stories, while brilliantly told, have arguably contributed to a glamorised, almost nostalgic view of organised crime that many Italians find uncomfortable. They distort the reality of what the mafia truly is: not a code-bound fraternity, but a violent, parasitic force that thrives on fear, intimidation and silence.

For many Italians, especially those who have lived under mafia influence, the fascination with this image can feel like a painful misunderstanding – a pop culture export that romanticises what they have spent generations fighting against.

THE FIGHTBACK

Decades of arrests, trials and anti-mafia laws have weakened Italy's criminal networks, but few experts would say they've been defeated. Groups like the 'Ndrangheta have simply gone quieter, diversifying into finance, real estate and global markets. Still, resistance is growing.

Civic movements like Addiopizzo in Palermo, which supports businesses refusing to pay protection money, show that public silence is breaking. The mafia remains a threat, but so too does the determination of those working to dismantle its hold. Not just in courtrooms, but on the streets.

The mafia may be woven into Italy's past, but the country fights hard to make sure it doesn't define its future. Behind the headlines and Hollywood myths, a quieter battle continues. One being slowly won by honest, law-abiding citizens. Not their pinky ring-wearing mafia don adversaries.

Central Bar
Central Bar

The shadow of various organised criminal organisations still looms large over parts in the south of Italy

CONTRO LE MAFIE, PRO ALLA LEGALIZZAZIONE

Protesters gather to denounce the Camorra in Naples and pay tribute to some of their victims

Images Getty Images

Image Getty Images

ARCHIT

ARTE & ETTURA

ART & ARCHITECTURE

24 RENAISSANCE

FROM MAJESTIC CATHEDRALS TO VISIONARY PAINTINGS, THE RENAISSANCE PRODUCED WONDERS OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE THAT STILL CAPTIVATE TODAY. CHECK OUT 24 OF THE MOST ICONIC PIECES...

WORDS NATALIE DENTON

Between the 14th and 16th centuries, the Renaissance saw art and architecture flourish under the influence of humanist ideals and a revived interest in classical antiquity, marking an era of extraordinary creativity and forward-thinking techniques. Artists mastered perspective, anatomy, and proportion, infusing their works with realistic detail and emotional depth, while architects reimagined sacred buildings and civic spaces with harmonious symmetry, grand domes, and classical forms inspired by Ancient Rome and Greece. Italy's cities became vibrant centres of patronage, innovation, and competition, attracting some of history's most brilliant minds, including Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Botticelli, who together, produced works that influenced generations of creators, shaped the trajectory of Western culture and still continue to inspire today. Unquestionably best viewed in situ to appreciate their full impact, which will you see first?

MONA LISA CREATED 1503-06

The *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci is perhaps the world's most famous painting. It's difficult to think of another piece of artwork that has been scrutinised, analysed, discussed and written about to quite the same degree as this one and the fact that it is instantly recognisable, means it has remained in the public consciousness and been parodied more than any other piece of art in the world.

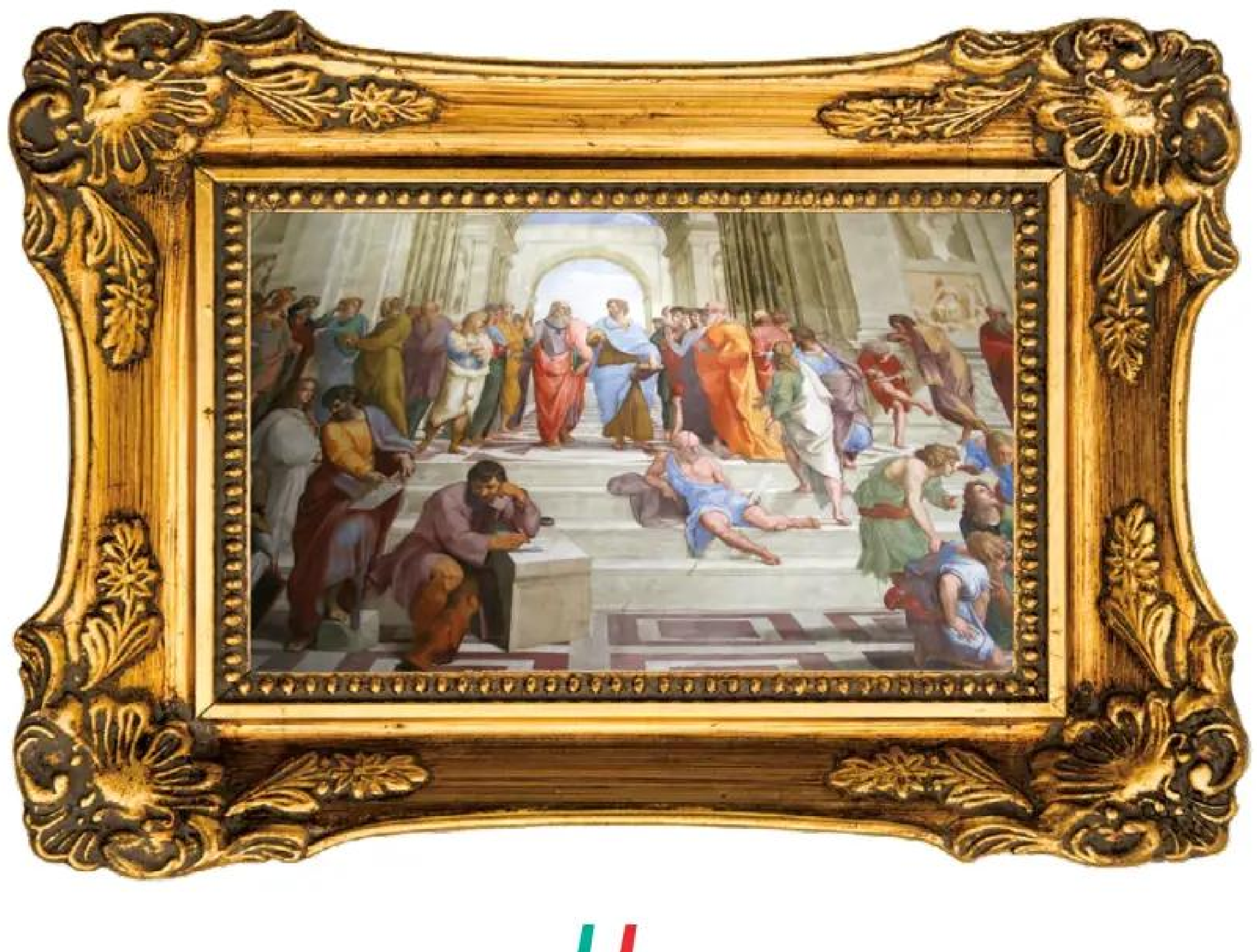
But however famous the portrait is, the inspiration behind that infamous half-smile has never been truly ascertained. Some believe the model was da Vinci's mother, Caterina, or Princess Isabella of Naples, or a Spanish noblewomen named Costanza d'Avalos. Some even suggested that da Vinci based the portrait on his own likeness – due to the subject's slightly masculine facial features. Perhaps the most plausible answer came from art historian, Giorgio Vasari, who suggested the model was Lisa Gherardini del Giocondo, a wealthy silk merchant's wife and mother of five children. This theory was backed up by the recent discovery of a 500-year-old note by one of da Vinci's acquaintances that stated the artist was working on Lisa's portrait.

After being acquired by King Francis I of France, it is now the property of the French Republic and has remained on permanent display at the Louvre Museum in Paris since 1797. It continues to remain one of the most visited artworks in the world.

SCHOOL OF ATHENS CREATED 1509-11

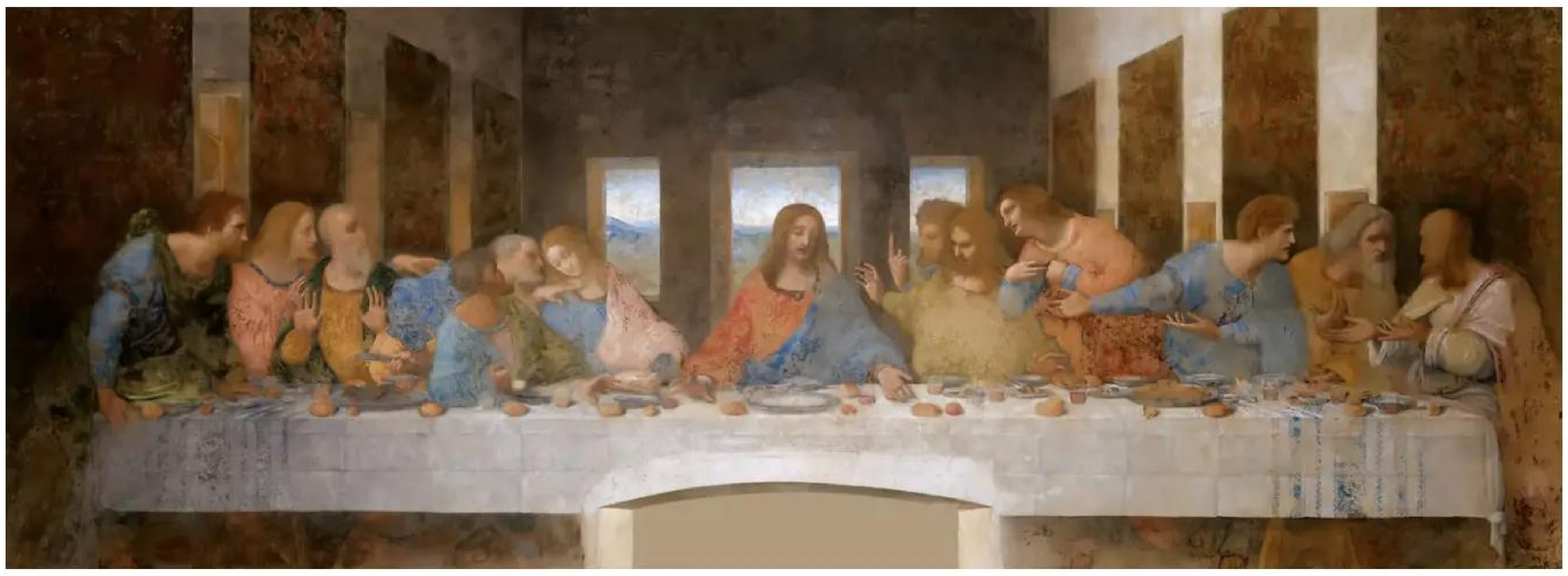
Considered by many to be the perfect embodiment of the classical spirit of the Renaissance, *The School Of Athens* by Italian artist Raphael formed part of a commission to decorate rooms of the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican. The image is one of a group of four main fresco murals on each wall of the Stanza della Segnatura that depict different areas of human knowledge (religion, poetry, law) and, as represented by *The School Of Athens*, philosophy. The theme of each mural is identified with a separate tondo (circular artwork) situated above the main piece. The tondo above *The School Of Athens* reads, 'Causarum Cognito', which means 'seeking knowledge of causes' and appears to echo Aristotle's belief that the sign of wisdom is knowing why.

Though it is largely believed that nearly every great Ancient Greek philosopher can be found in the mural, actually determining which one is which has proved to be somewhat challenging, especially as Raphael had to come up with new ways to allude to figures for whom there were no traditional visual representations. Socrates, in green robes near the middle of the painting, is someone who is instantly recognisable thanks to numerous classic busts. However, for other figures a knowledge of Greek philosophers is required to interpret the gestures and link them to their ancient counterparts.



> "
> [IT IS] CONSIDERED TO BE THE PERFECT EMBODIMENT OF THE RENAISSANCE

TREASURES



THE LAST SUPPER CREATED 1494-96

One of the most famous works by Renaissance artist, Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper* is a mural on the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. Originally commissioned as part of planned renovations to the church and its convent buildings by Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan, it measures 4.6 x 8.8m (15 x 29ft). The image depicts the scene of the Last Supper of Jesus Christ with his disciples, and shows the dismay among the disciples when Jesus announced one of them would betray him.

To get the detail he required, da Vinci painted *The Last Supper* on a dry wall rather than wet plaster, adding an undercoat of white lead to enhance the brightness of the paints. Sadly, due to these methods, very little of the original painting remains today.

BIBLIOTECA MARCIANA CREATED 1537

Situated in Venice in northern Italy, the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (National Library of St Mark's) is one of the earliest surviving manuscript depositories in the country and holds one of the world's greatest collection of classical texts. Originally designed by Jacopo Sansovino, work commenced on the building in 1537 and continued right through until his death in 1570. Aside from the first 16 arcade bays, frescoes and other ornamental designs, the building remained incomplete until 1588, when the last five bays were finished by Vincenzo Scamozzi, staying true to Sansovino's original design.

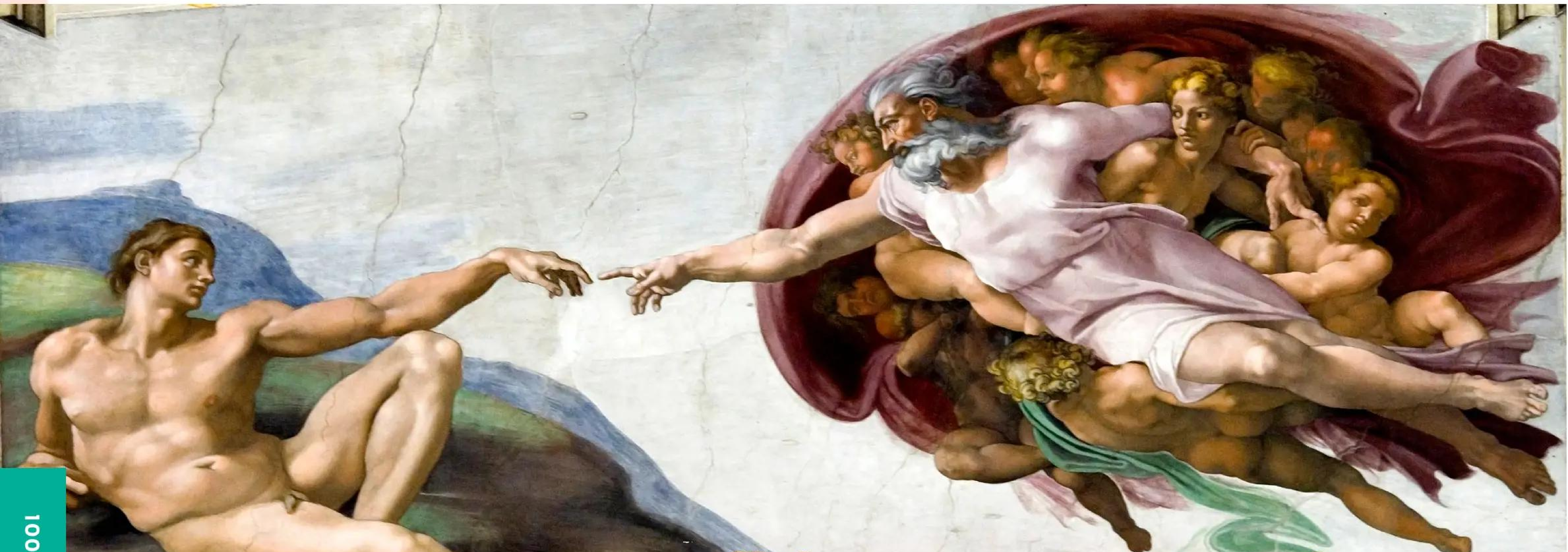
Like the British Library, a law passed in 1603 required that a copy of every new book was deposited at the Marciana and with the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797, all of the manuscripts and books from the religious houses that were suppressed under the Napoleonic regime were moved there. Today the Marciana houses about 1 million books, 13,000 manuscripts and thousands of other documents and works of great historical significance.

Images wiki/Maria Schnitzmeier CC BY-SA 3.0 (Biblioteca Marciana)

CREATION OF ADAM CREATED c.1508-1512

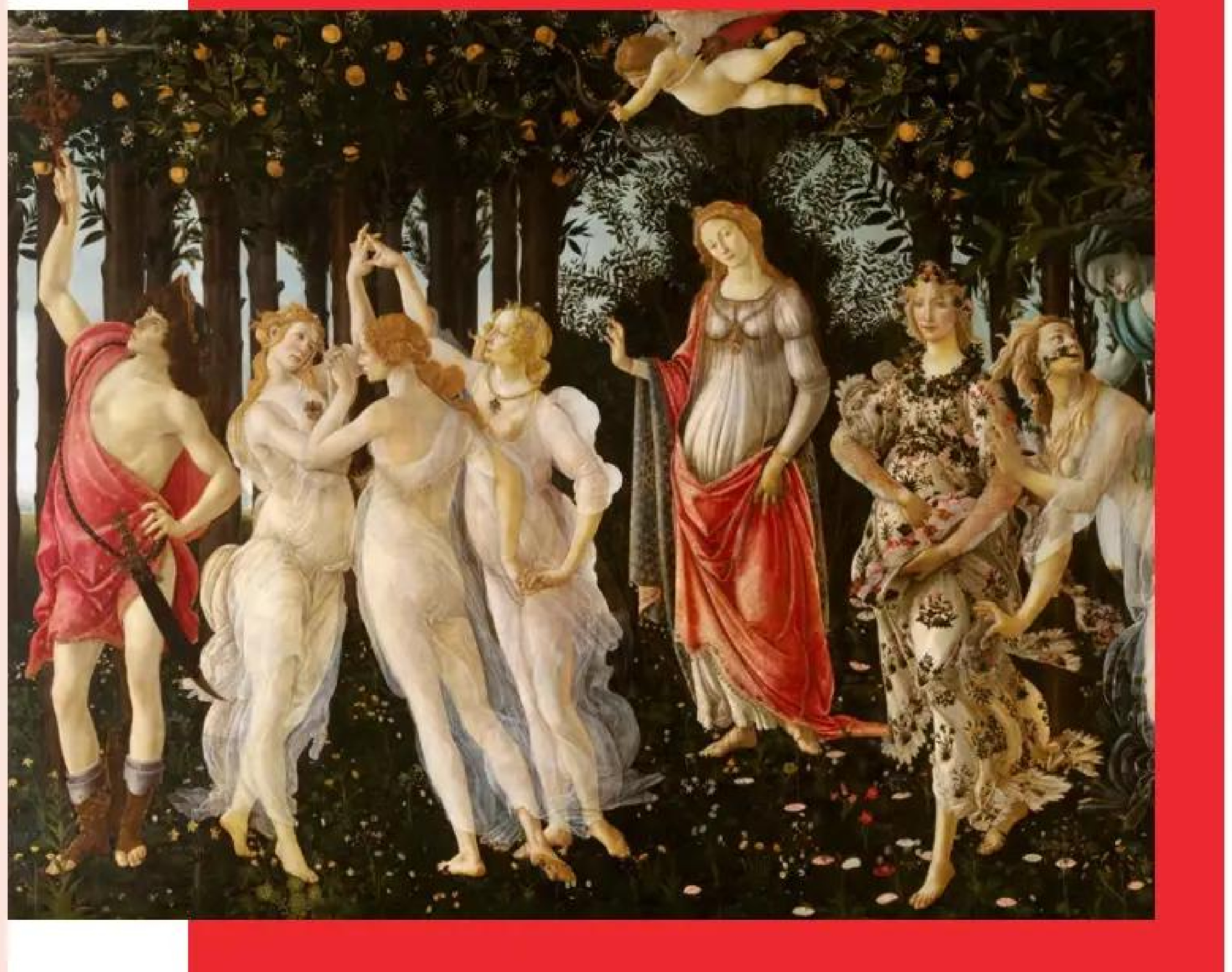
Another instantly recognisable piece of Renaissance artwork, *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo forms part of the ceiling in the Sistine Chapel in the Apostolic Palace. Created using the fresco method of painting onto freshly laid lime plaster, water enables the pigment to merge with the plaster so that when it sets, the painting becomes an integral part of the wall. The mural illustrates the Bibical creation narrative from the Book of Genesis in which God creates man in the form of Adam. In the composition, God is depicted as a white-haired old man reaching out to give life to a naked Adam. It has also been speculated that the more feminine figure protected by God's left arm is actually Eve.

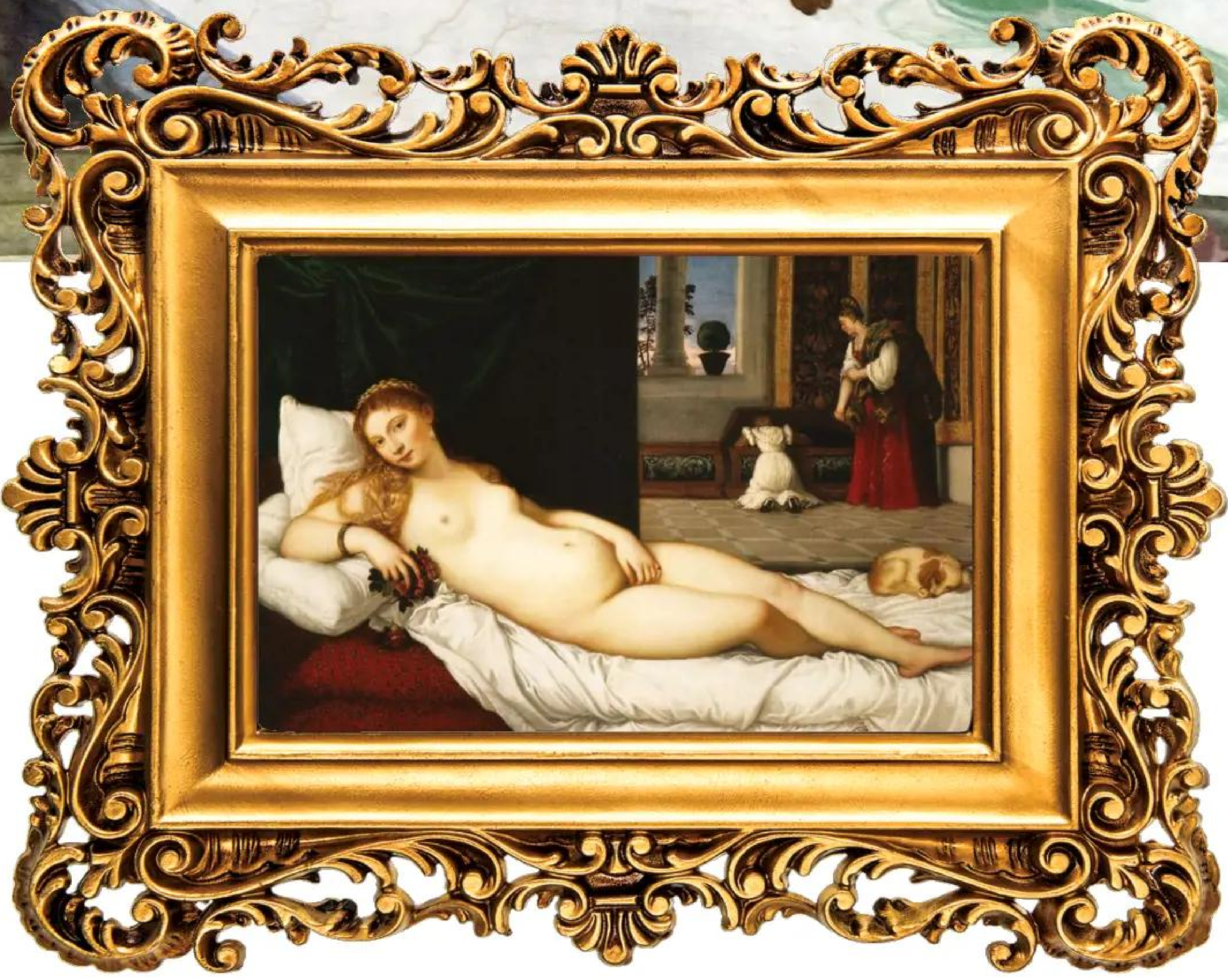
The image of the near-touching fingers of man and God, has become one of the most replicated religious paintings of all time with countless imitations and parodies cropping up throughout the years.



PRIMAVERA CREATED c.1477-82

Rich in allegory, Botticelli's *Primavera* gathers Venus, Cupid, and the Three Graces in a lush orange grove, reflecting the humanist ideals of the Early Renaissance. Painted in Florence, likely for the Medici, it remains one of the most discussed works in Western art and now resides in the Uffizi's Botticelli Room.





VENUS OF URBINO CREATED 1538

Currently hanging in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence, the *Venus of Urbino* is an oil painting by Titian that features the goddess Venus removed from traditional godly surrounds and placed in a more domestic environment. Reclining on a bed and staring directly at the viewer, Venus appears unconcerned by her nudity and in one hand she holds a posy of roses while the other is casually placed across her genitals. In the background two maids can be seen rummaging through a chest, perhaps in search of clothes. The painting was commissioned by Guidobaldo II della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino, apparently as an instructive model for the young bride he married in 1534. The sleeping dog in the background is often a symbol of fidelity, which would add weight to this notion.

DAVID CREATED 1501-04

Standing at 5.17m (17ft) tall, Michelangelo's *David* is a marble statue that was originally commissioned as one of a series of statues to be placed along the roofline of Florence Cathedral. However, as work neared completion on the six-ton statue, it became apparent that it would be impossible to raise it up to the roof of the cathedral and so an alternative location would have to be found. Because of the Biblical hero that the statue represented, it was instead placed in the public square outside the Palazzo della Signoria, the seat of civic government in Florence. This was because, at the time of the statue's creation, the Republic of Florence was an independent city-state that was threatened on all sides by more powerful rival states, and so David – the little man triumphing over the giant Goliath – came to symbolise the defence of Florence's civil liberties.

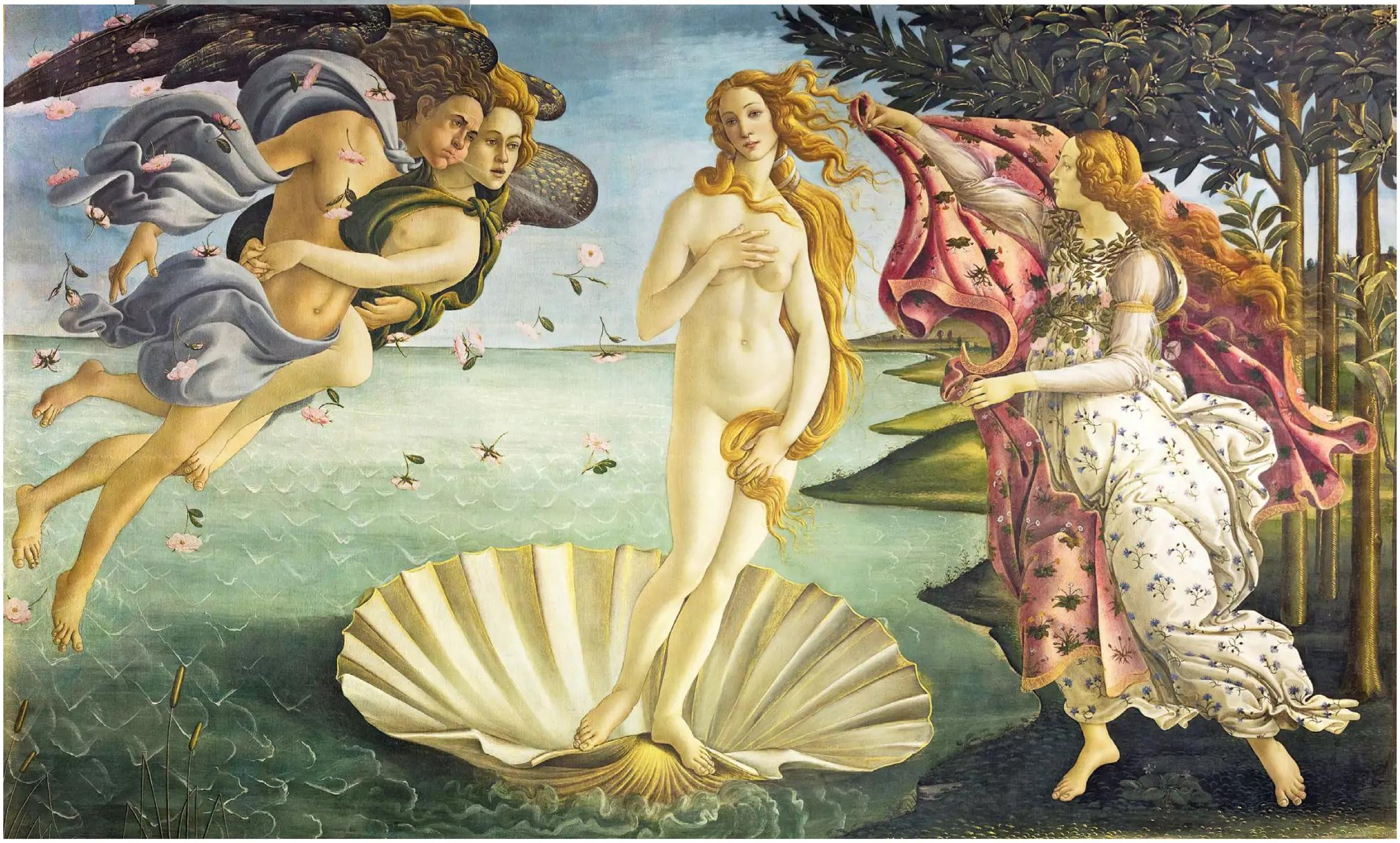
In 1873, the statue was moved to the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence, with a replica being put in its place in the square.

THE BIRTH OF VENUS CREATED 1482-85

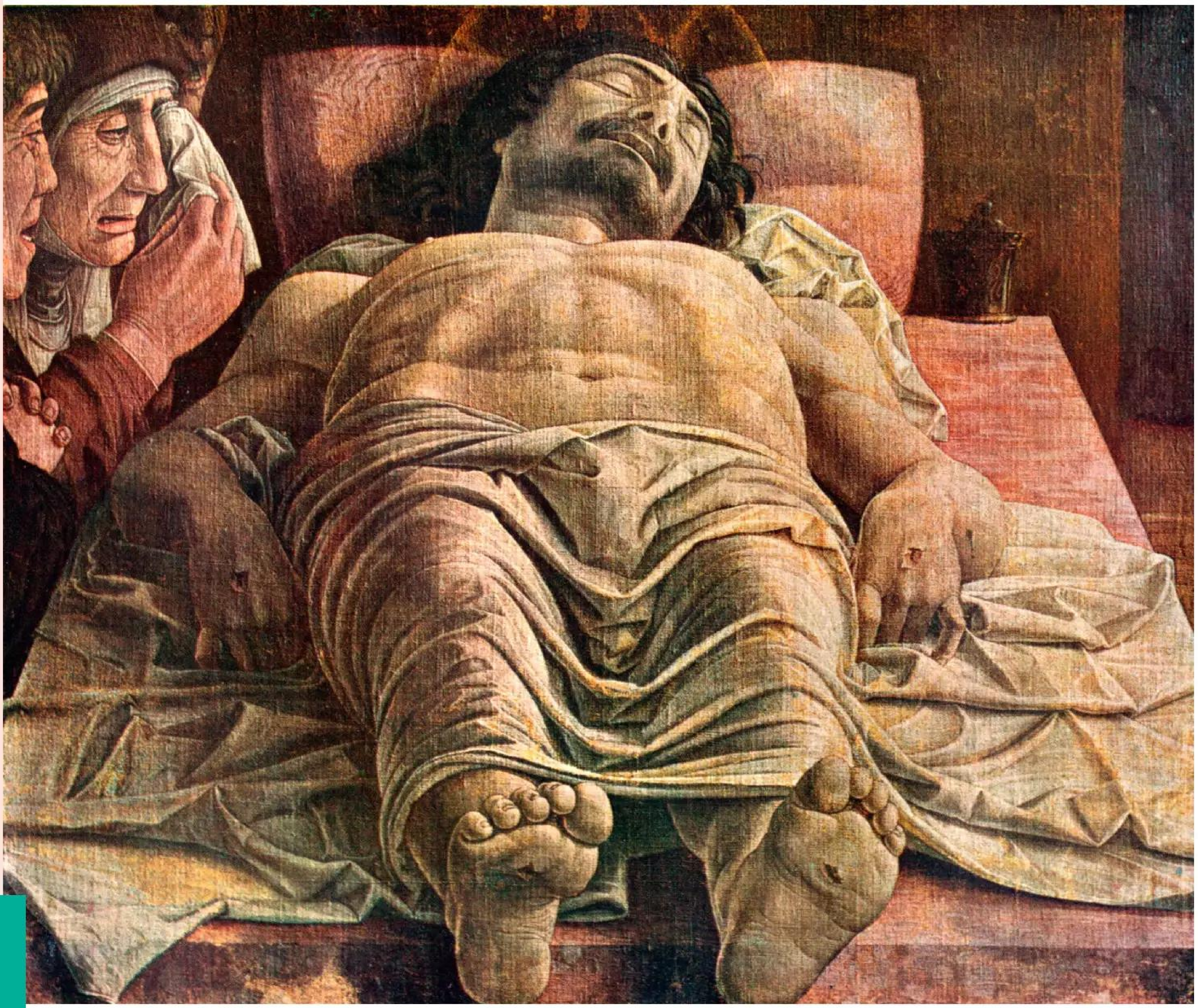
Painted in the 1480s by Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus* depicts the goddess Venus emerging from the sea as an adult woman. The theme comes from *Metamorphoses*, a Latin narrative poem by the Roman poet Ovid, that chronicles the history of the world by blending history with mythology. In the painting, Venus can be seen standing in a shell that is being blown into land by Zephyr, the god of the west wind. Waiting for Venus on the shore is a Horae, a goddess of the seasons, who holds a cape ready to clothe the newborn deity. A fourth figure can be seen being carried by Zephyr, but it is not entirely clear if this is an Aura (wind nymph) or Chloris, a nymph associated with spring and the blossoming of flowers (the roses being blown towards Venus may suggest this is the case).

The painting is on canvas, which was unusual for the time, as the trend was to paint on wood panels. The piece measures roughly 1.8 x 2.7m (5.7 x 9.1ft) and it currently resides in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy.

> "MICHELANGELO'S *DAVID* WAS ORIGINALLY COMMISSIONED…[FOR] FLORENCE CATHEDRAL



Images Getty Images (Creation of Adam, Primavera, The Birth of Venus), wiki/Jörg Bittner Unna CC BY 3.0 (David)



THE LAMENTATION OVER THE DEAD CHRIST CREATED c.1480

Housed in one of Italy's most famous art galleries, Milan's Pinacoteca di Brera, Mantegna's stark depiction of Christ's body is a masterclass in foreshortening. Viewed from the feet, the dramatic perspective was groundbreaking, confronting audiences with raw humanity and profound realism. Its emotional intensity and technical daring make it one of the Renaissance's most arresting devotional images.

EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF GATTAMELATA CREATED 1447-53

Located at the Piazza del Santo in Padua, Italy, the *Equestrian Statue of Gattamelata* is a sculpture by Renaissance artist Donatello that depicts the mercenary leader Erasmo da Narni, known as 'Gattamelata', riding a horse. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the Italian city-states of Venice, Florence and Genoa were wealthy through trade, yet lacked significant armies to protect all of that wealth. So the nobles hired extra muscle in the form of mercenaries (or *condottieri*) to help protect them.

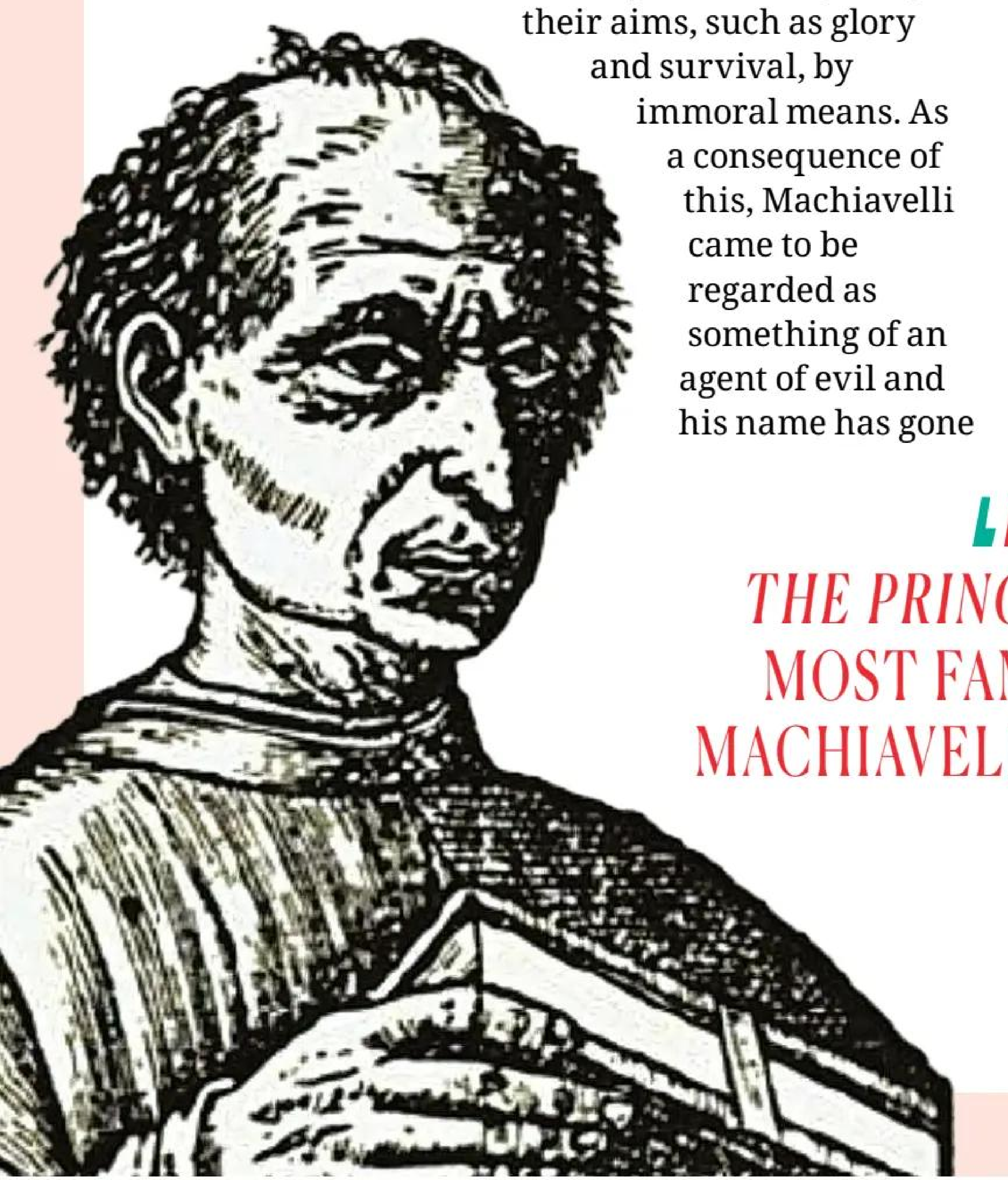
After Erasmo's death in 1443, the Republic of Venice commissioned a statue in his honour. Measuring 3.4 x 3.9m (11.1 x 12.8ft), with a base measuring 7.8 x 4.1m (25.6 x 13.4ft), it is the earliest surviving example of a Renaissance equestrian statue and the first to introduce such a grand pose from the horse – a pose that would be replicated countless times in the future in statues honouring military heroes. Keeping the man and his steed in normal life size, rather than making them larger than life, Donatello instead used emotion, position and symbolism to project Erasmo's power.

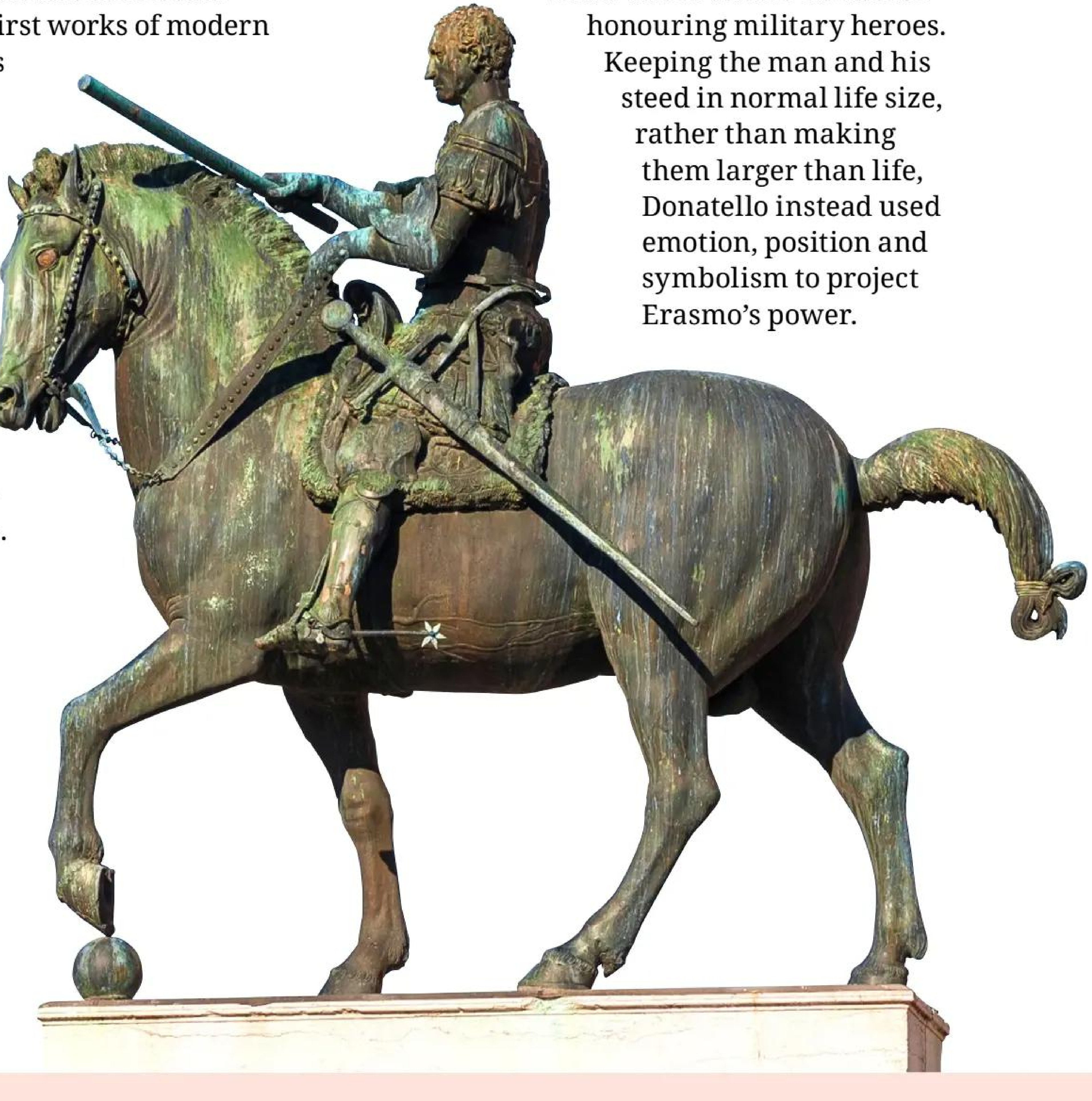
THE PRINCE CREATED 1513

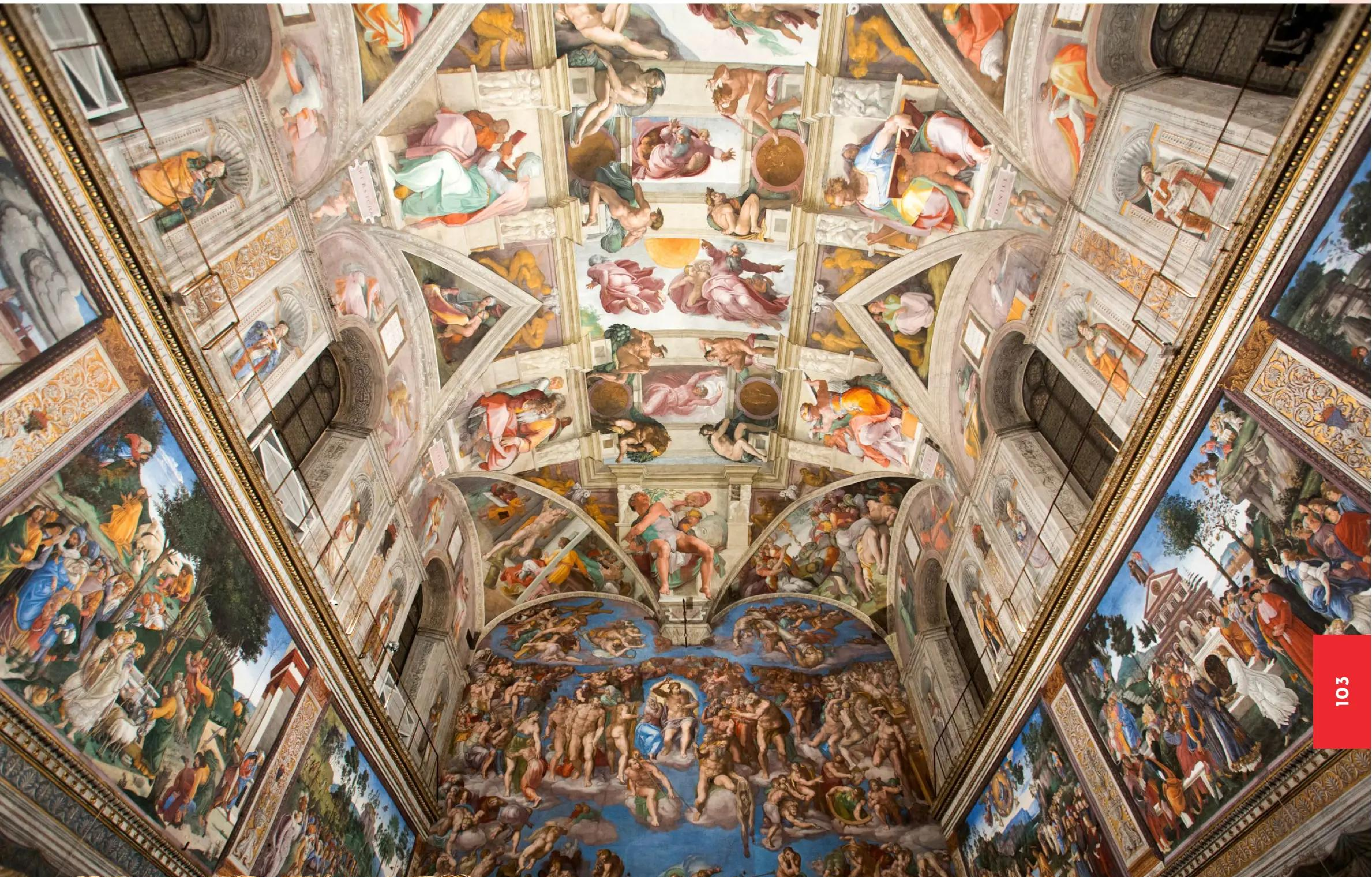
The Prince is a political treatise by the Italian diplomat and political theorist, Niccolo Machiavelli, and it sent shockwaves through Europe when it was published in 1532 by detailing ruthless tactics for gaining absolute power at the abandonment of conventional morality. Written in Italian rather than Latin, which was considered innovative at the time, *The Prince* describes how princes can justify their aims, such as glory and survival, by immoral means. As a consequence of this, Machiavelli came to be regarded as something of an agent of evil and his name has gone on to become synonymous with unscrupulous cunning and deception.

Though relatively short, *The Prince* is the most famous of Machiavelli's works and considered one of the first works of modern political philosophy. Its chapters cover topics such as generosity versus parsimony and cruelty versus mercy, and the treatise had a profound impact on political leaders throughout the modern West, where the printing press catapulted it into political consciousness.

> "*THE PRINCE* IS THE MOST FAMOUS OF MACHIAVELLI'S WORKS







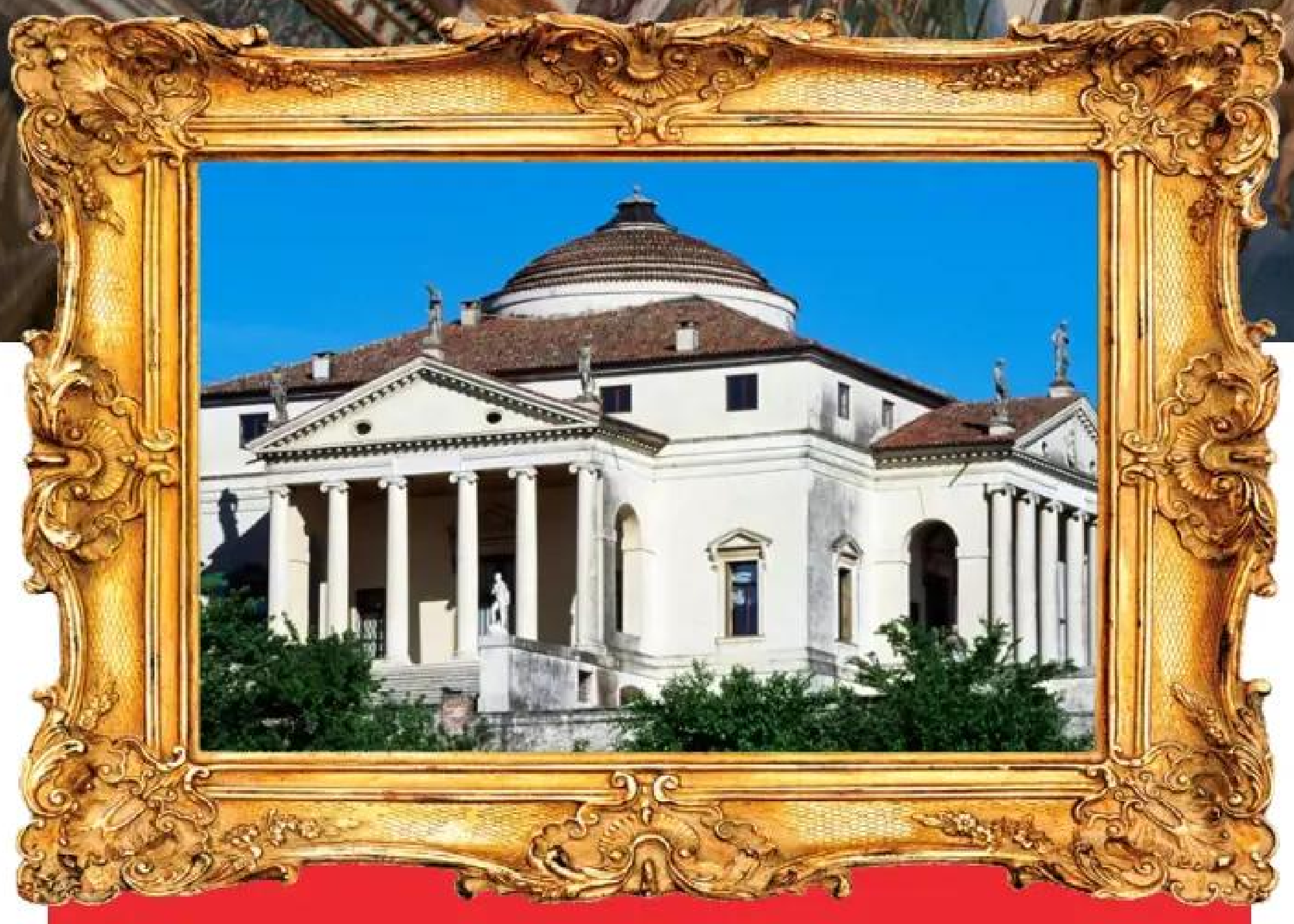
THE SISTINE CHAPEL CEILING

CREATED 1508-12

Although we have already looked at the *Creation of Adam*, it is now time to marvel at the work as a whole. Michelangelo was actually commissioned to build the tomb for Pope Julius II in 1505, which was to include 40 statues and be finished in five years. However, Michelangelo experienced constant interruptions and the tomb, located in the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli, ended up taking 40 years and was never finished to his satisfaction. It was during this period that Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel ceiling, starting in 1508 and finishing four years later.

Though originally commissioned to paint the Twelve Apostles on the triangular ceiling supports and cover the central part of the ceiling with ornament, Michelangelo persuaded the Pope to grant him free rein and proposed a more complex scheme representing the creation of man, the fall of man, the promise of salvation through the prophets and the genealogy of Christ, stretching over the ceiling.

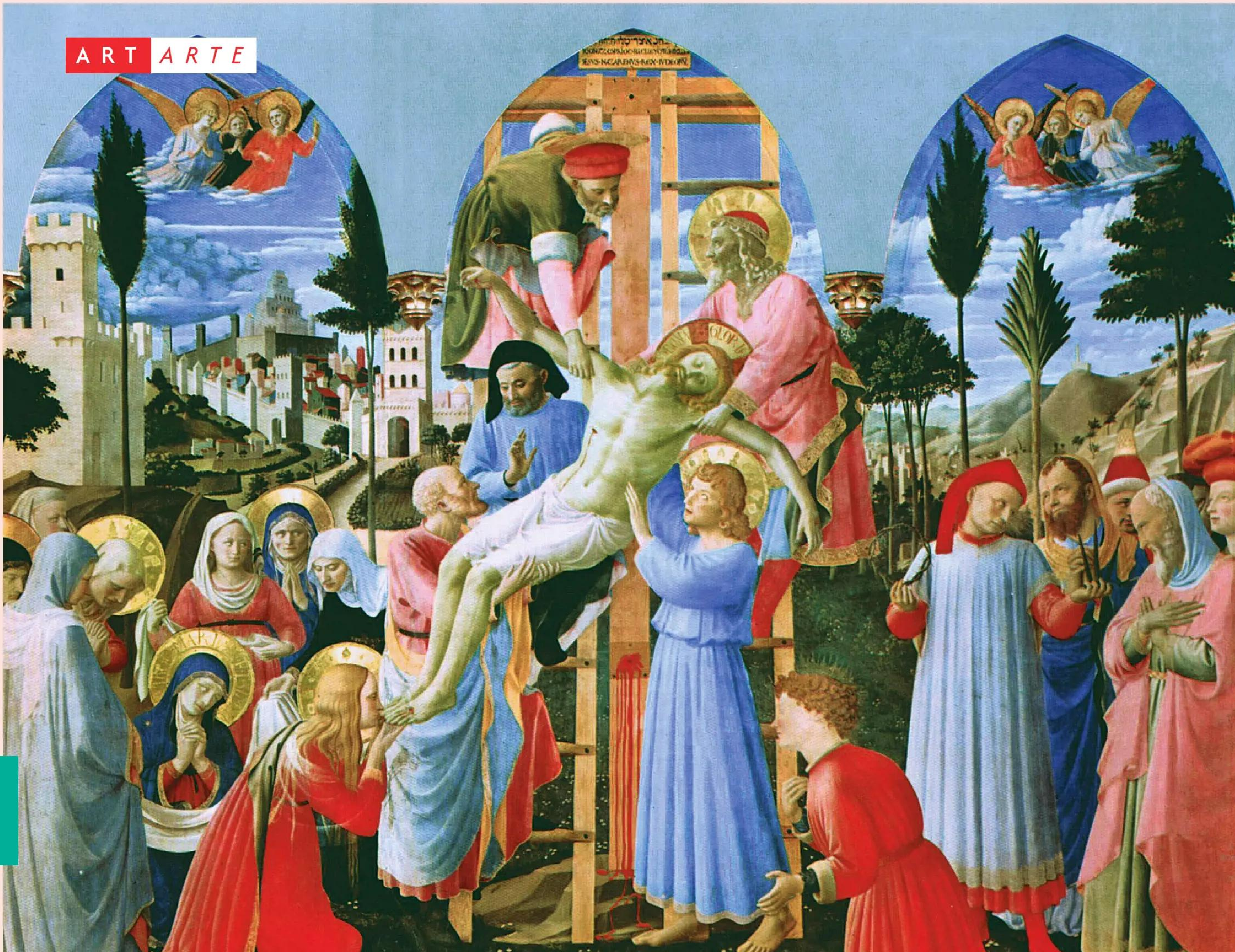
Containing over 300 figures, the ceiling focuses on nine episodes from the Book of Genesis divided up into three groups – God's Creation of the Earth, God's Creation of Humankind and the State of Humanity. The triangular ceiling supports were reserved for 12 men and women who prophesied the coming of Christ. The paintings have ensured that a queue of people snakes around St Peter's Square on a daily basis to marvel at Michelangelo's handiwork.



VILLA LA ROTONDA CREATED 1567–71

Perched on a hill outside Vicenza, Palladio's Villa La Rotonda embodies Renaissance harmony and stands as an architectural jewel of the era, with four identical temple-front façades, perfect symmetry, and a domed central hall inspired by classical Roman ideals. Also known as Villa Almerico Capra, it was so admired that it became a model for grand buildings across Europe in the centuries that followed.

Images Getty Images



DEPOSITION FROM THE CROSS

CREATED 1437-40

Housed at the National Museum of San Marco in Florence, the *Deposition from the Cross* by Italian Renaissance painter Fra Angelico, represents the Gospels' accounts of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus taking Christ down from the cross after his crucifixion. The piece had actually already been started by Lorenzo Monaco for the Strozzi Chapel in the Florentine church of Santa Trinita – the use of bright colours is characteristic of Monaco, as can be seen in the *Coronation of the Virgin*. However, when Monaco died (in roughly 1425), Angelico stepped in to finish the piece.

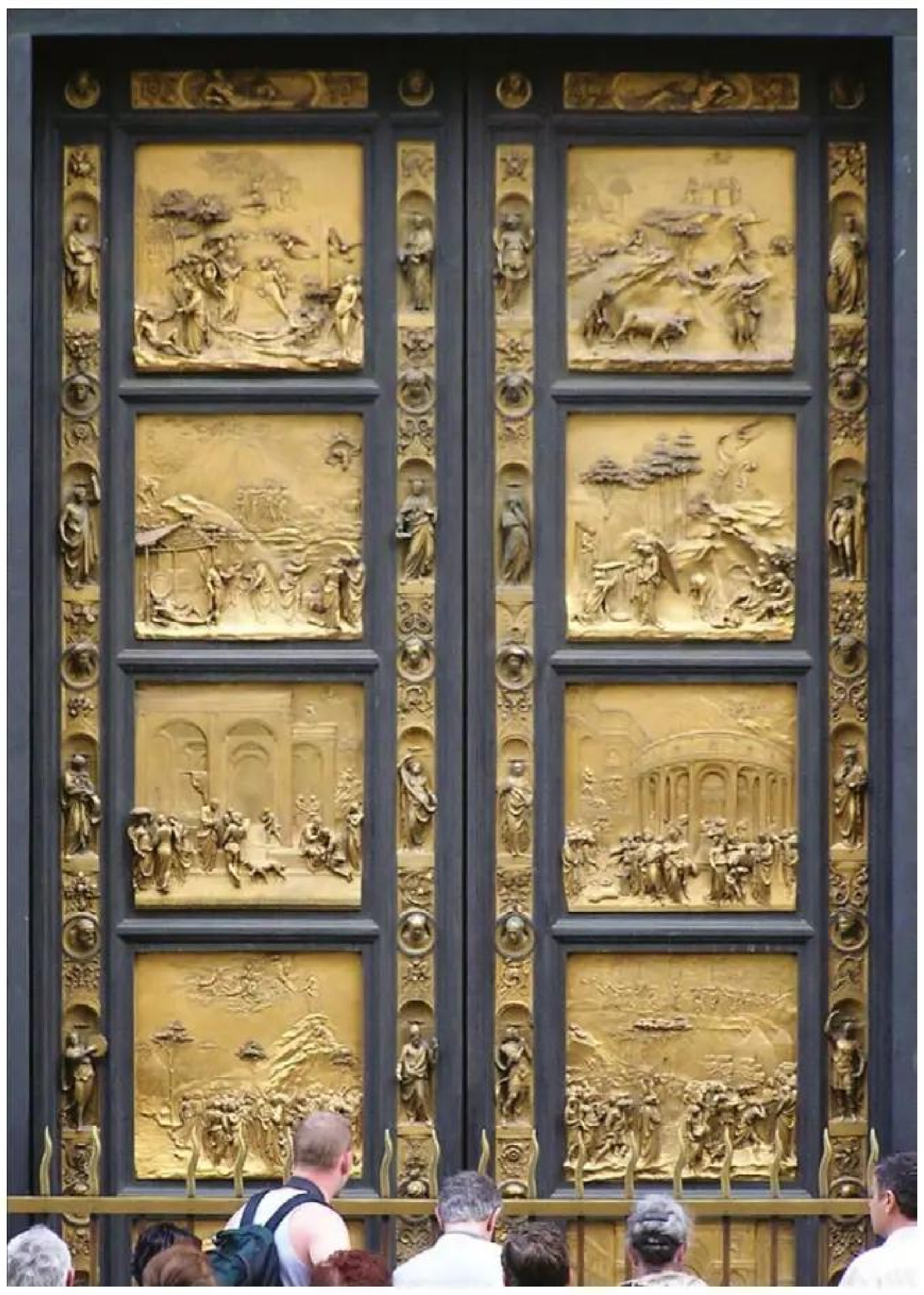
In the painting, Christ can be seen being supported by several people, including Mary Magdalene kissing his feet – a symbol of repentance. There is also a figure on the right wearing a red hat who can be seen holding the nails from the cross and the crown of thorns. These are the symbols of passion and sacrifice.

> "WHEN MONACO DIED, ANGELICO STEPPED IN TO FINISH THE PIECE

ST PETER'S BASILICA

CREATED 1506–1626

Regarded as the most important church in Christendom, St Peter's Basilica began in 1506 under Donato Bramante, with Michelangelo shaping its iconic dome and Carlo Maderno completing the façade. While rooted in Renaissance ideals of symmetry and proportion, Bernini's Baroque piazza and lavish interior add grandeur, making it an enduring symbol of Vatican City.

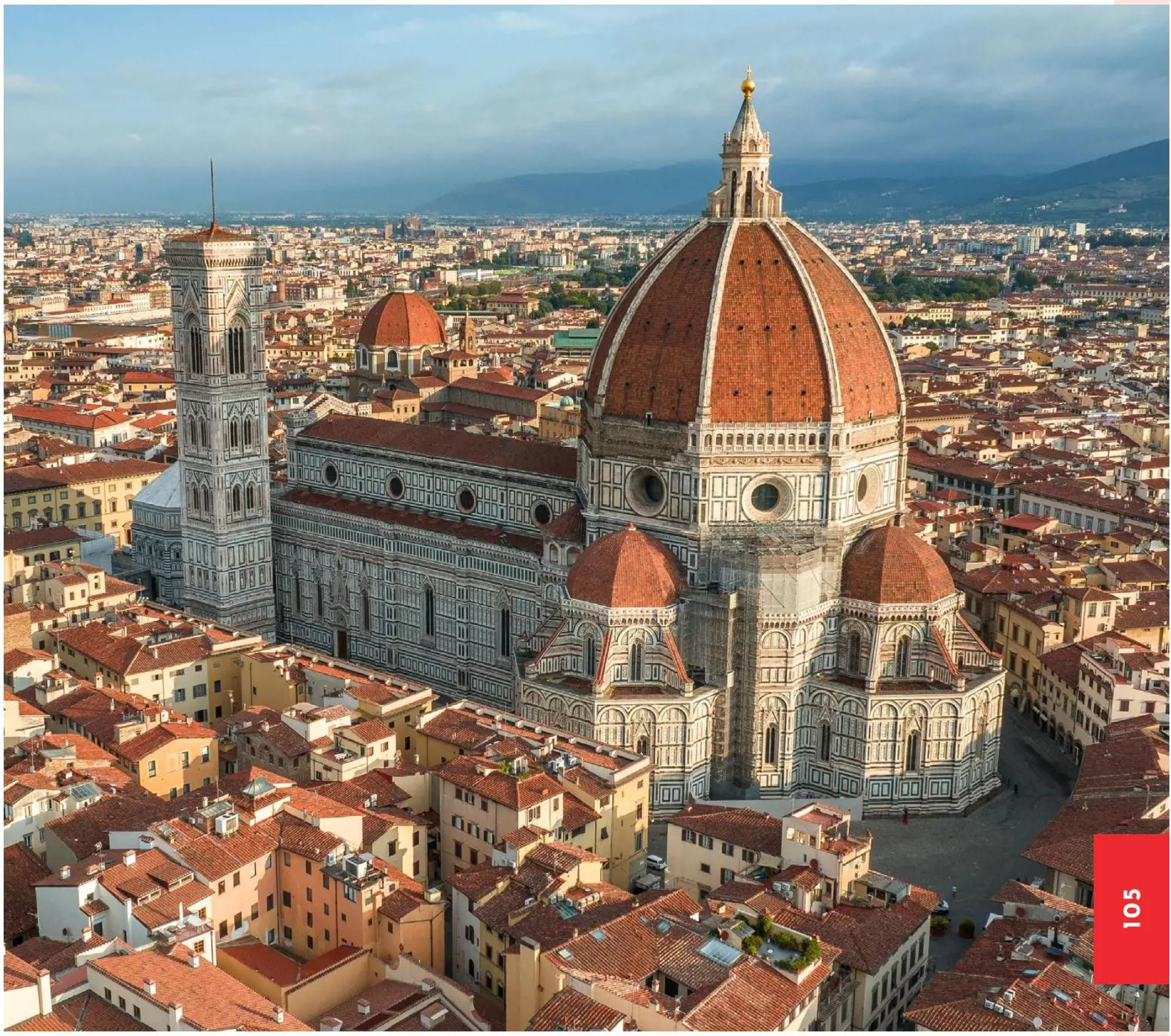


THE GATES OF PARADISE

CREATED 1425-52

So-called by Michelangelo, the Gates Of Paradise are the bronze doors of the Florence Baptistery that were designed and created by the Italian artist Lorenzo Ghiberti. The project was a young Ghiberti's first claim to fame as the then 23-year-old won a competition to design the first set of bronze doors (Brunelleschi was the runner-up). The original plan was that the doors would depict scenes from the Old Testament (a trial piece depicting the sacrifice of Isaac remains) but this was changed so that the doors would instead depict scenes from the New Testament.

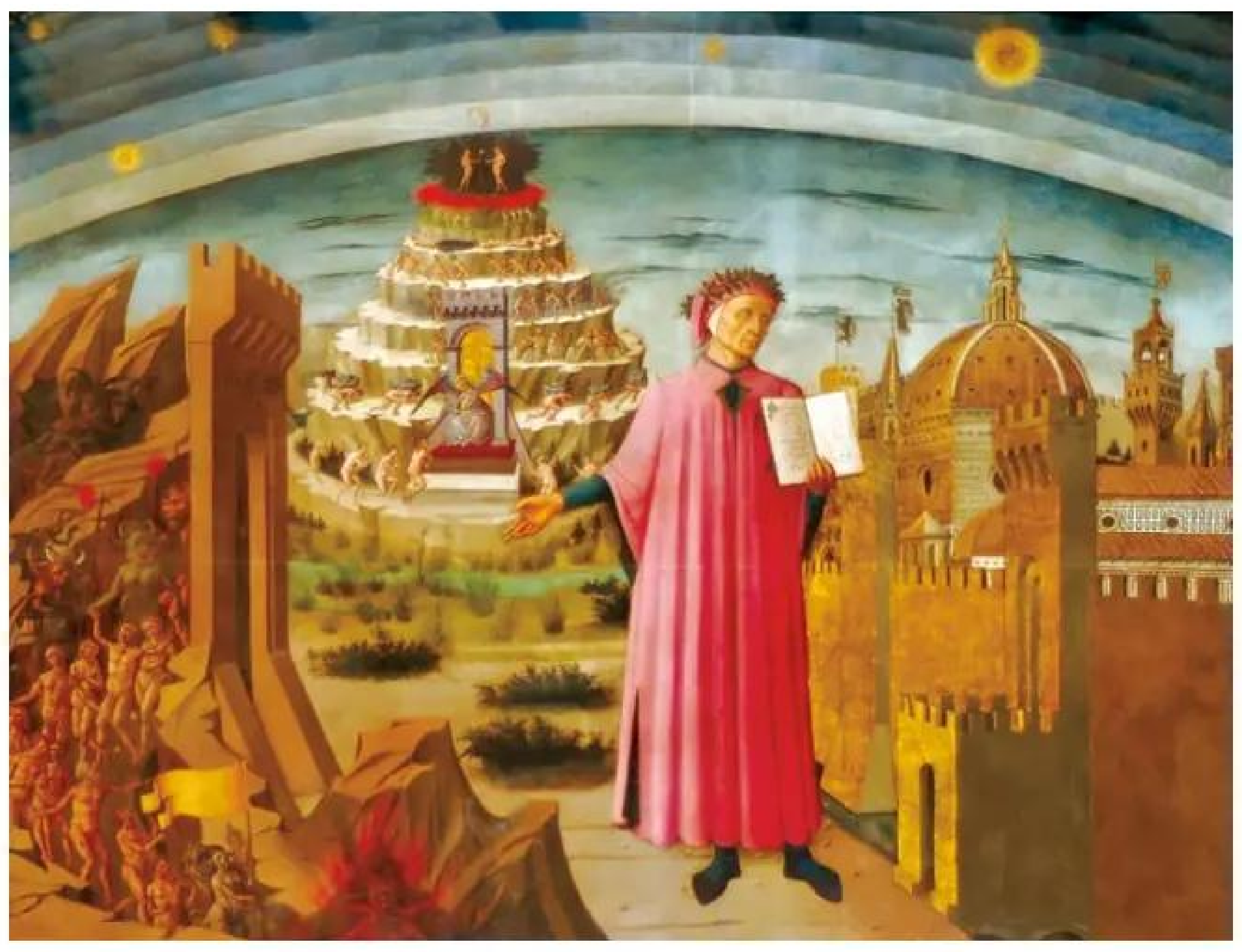
To complete this commission, Ghiberti set up a large workshop where many artists trained, including Donatello, Masolino and Michelozzo. When his initial set of 28 panels was complete, he was then commissioned to produce a second set for another set of doors within the church, this time comprising of ten rectangular scenes from the Old Testament, as per the original brief.



FLORENCE CATHEDRAL CREATED 1296

Florence's cathedral dominates the city skyline thanks to its magnificent Renaissance dome designed and completed by Filippo Brunelleschi in 1436. Although a brick dome was created by the original architect, Arnolfo di Cambio, the building required an octagonal dome that was higher and wider and with no external buttresses. Italian architects considered Gothic-style buttresses to be ugly and they were actually banned in Florence.

Creating a dome for the cathedral posed many technical problems for Brunelleschi and so he looked to the Pantheon in Rome for inspiration. The Pantheon's dome was made from a single shell of concrete, the formula of which had been forgotten, so an alternate means had to be found. Brunelleschi's method involved creating a double shell of sandstone and marble, with a barrel-style series of stone and iron chains embedded within the inner dome that were rigid enough to hold their octagonal shape, support the weight and not cause the dome to deform. The result was a breathtaking feat of engineering.



LA COMMEDIA ILLUMINA FIRENZE

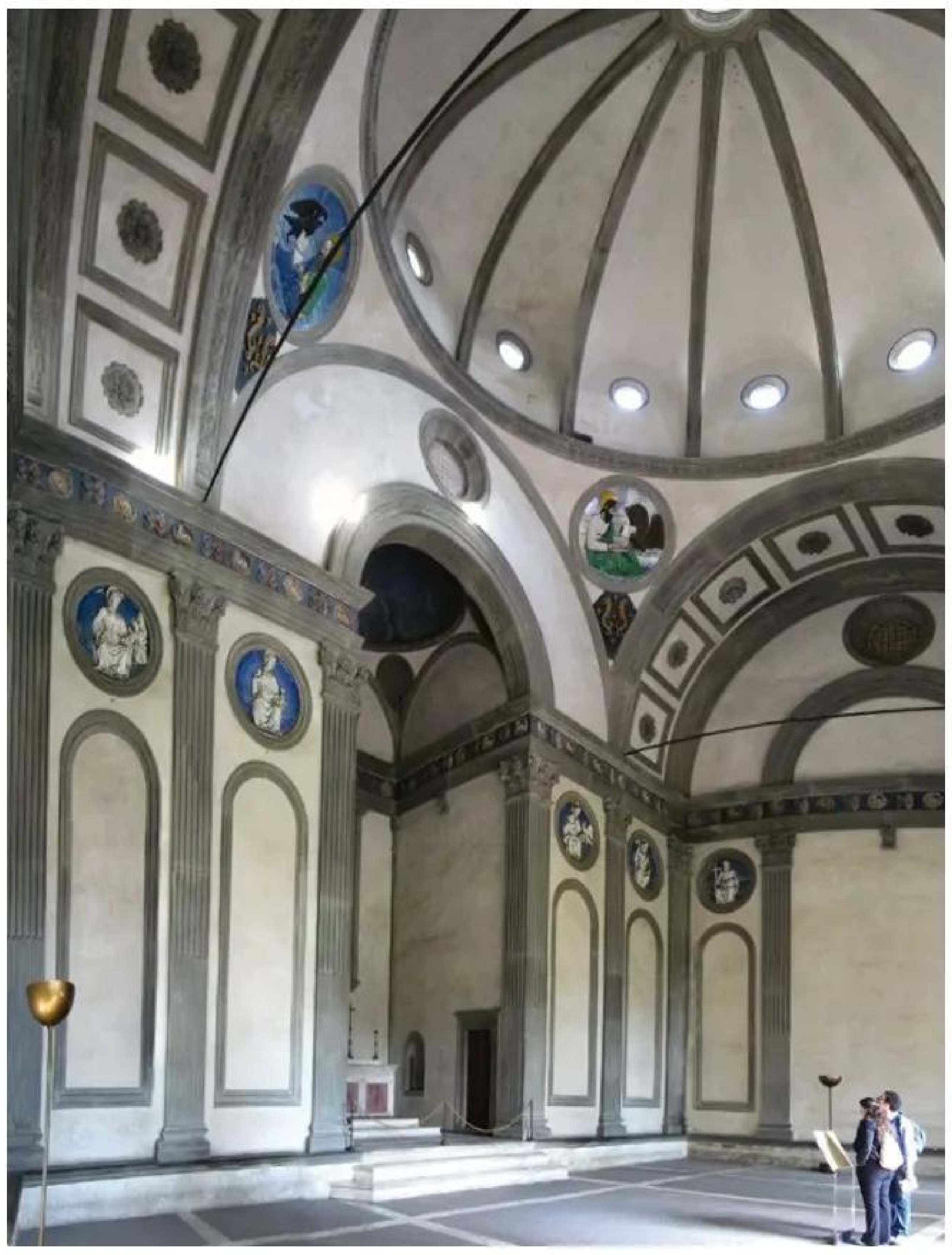
CREATED 1440s

Alternatively known as 'The Comedy Illuminating Florence', *La Commedia Illumina Firenze* is a painting by Domenico di Michelino that adorns the wall of Florence Cathedral.

The image depicts Dante Alighieri, the Italian poet, holding his work *The Divine Comedy*, which is widely considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language. The poem describes Dante's travels through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, drawing particular inspiration from the *Summa Theologica*, which was a handy compendium of all of the main theological teachings found in the Catholic Church.

Although Dante and his poem are at the forefront of the painting, the image also features the city of Florence and representations of Hell, Mount Purgatory, the earthly Paradise (with Adam and Eve), in addition to the celestial spheres.

Images Getty Images (St. Peter's Basilica, Florence Cathedral), wiki/Eteru CC BY-SA 3.0 (Gates of Paradise)

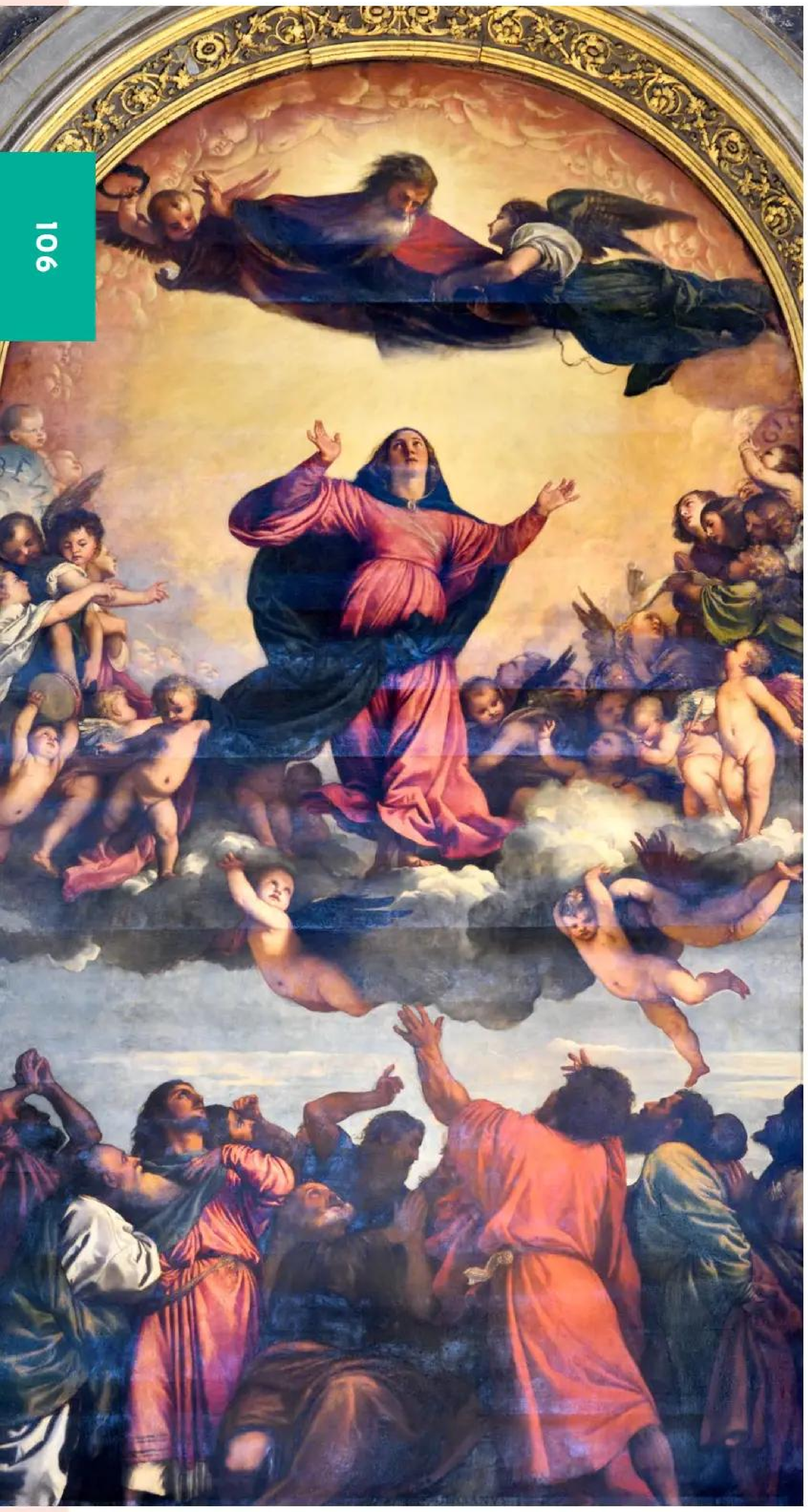


Images Getty Images (Assumption of the Virgin, Santa Maria dei Miracoli), wiki/Gryffindor CC BY-SA 3.0 (Pazzi Chapel), wiki/Pippo-b CC BY-SA 3.0 (Villa Farnese)

PAZZI CHAPEL CREATED 1443

The Pazzi Chapel is located on the southern flank of the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence, Italy, and is a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture. It was originally thought to have been the work of Italian architect and designer Filippo Brunelleschi, but many scholars believe he was only responsible for the plan of the chapel, which drew inspiration from simple shapes.

The chapel, which was used as the chapter house by the Santa Croce friars, is proceeded by an entrance hall-like atrium supported by six Corinthian columns placed next to a central arch. Inside, the chapel is rectangular in shape but contains one square room with a large umbrella-shaped dome. The white plaster on the walls is a cool contrast to the grey pilasters and beautiful terracotta decorations complete the stunning look, the architecture of which draws comparisons with Rome's Pantheon.



THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

CREATED 1516-18

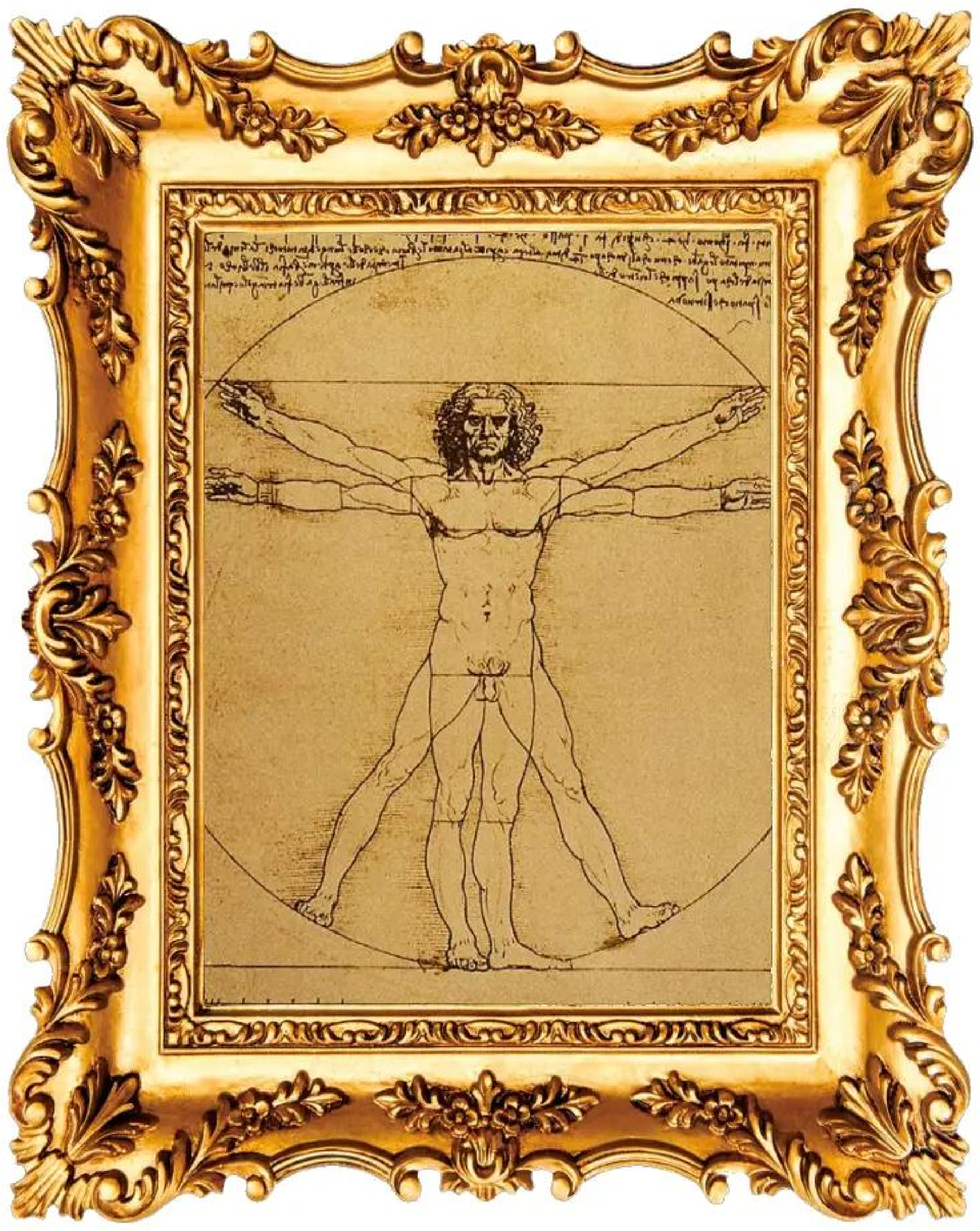
Soaring above the high altar of Venice's Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Titian's vast altarpiece transforms a common theme in Christian art into an innovative vision of movement and light. Dynamic figures, radiant colour, and a sweeping upward composition capture the Virgin's ascent, creating one of the most celebrated and influential works in European religious art.

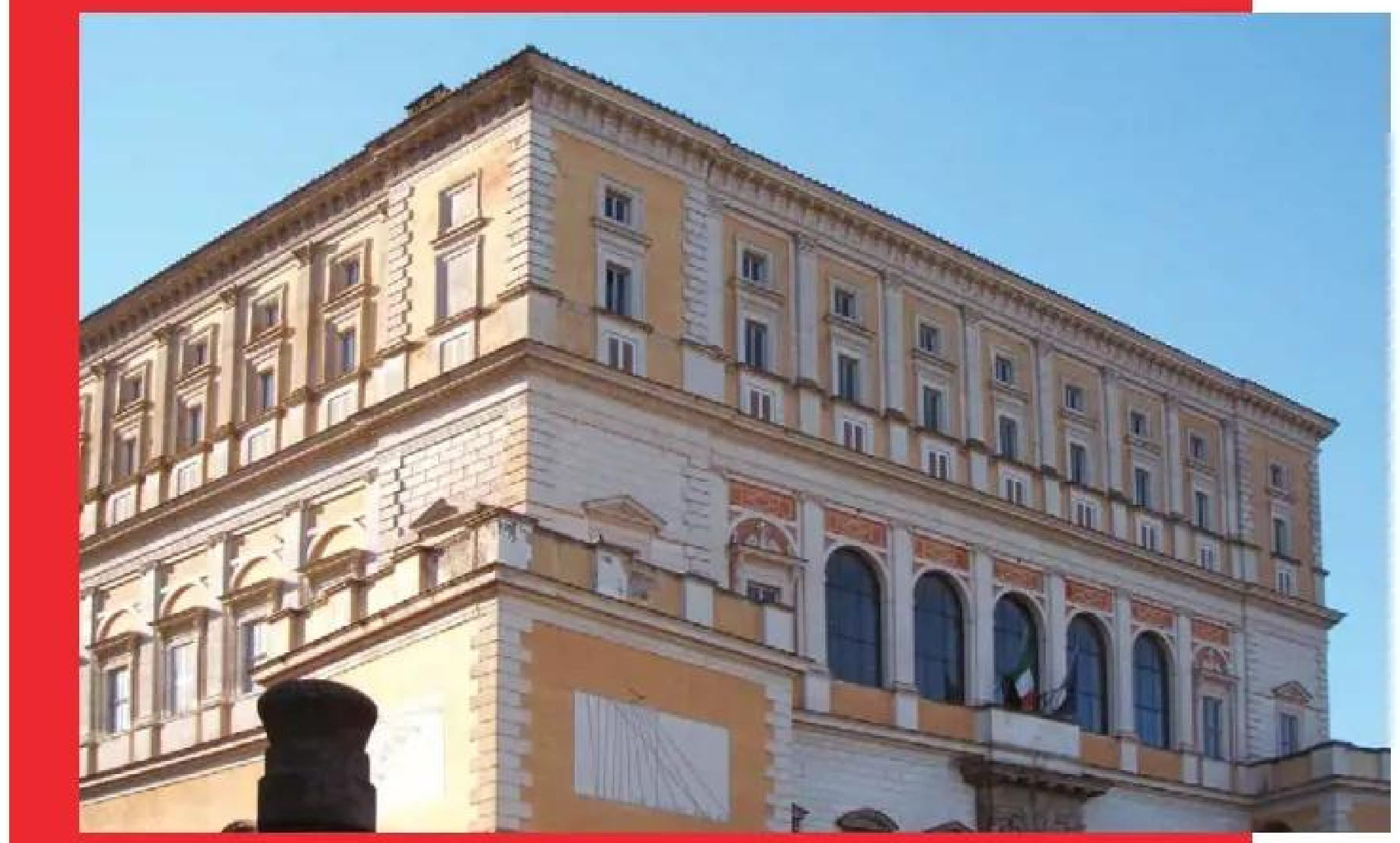
> “
> AN INNOVATIVE VISION OF MOVEMENT & LIGHT

VITRUVIAN MAN CREATED c.1490

The *Vitruvian Man* is a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci based on notes that examine the correlations of ideal human proportions by the Ancient Roman architect Vitruvius. It depicts a man in two superimposed positions inside a circle and a square which, according to Vitruvius in his treatise, *De Architectura*, demonstrates the human figure as being the principle source of proportion among the classical orders of architecture. The text that accompanies the sketch, delivered in da Vinci's favoured mirror writing, outlines the measurements of the human form and how they can be applied to architecture.

The drawing is relatively small for a piece of art, and it is kept at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice. Due to its somewhat fragile format, the paper is only occasionally put on display to the general public.





VILLA FARNESE CREATED 1559-83

Also known as Villa Caprarola, the Villa Farnese is a mansion situated in the town of Caprarola in the Viterbo province, Northern Lazio, Italy, designed by architect Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola. The site was originally acquired by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, who became Pope Paul III, and plans were drawn up to build an ambitious pentagonal-shaped building, complete with a pentagonal courtyard. The foundations for this structure were constructed between 1515 and 1530 but work stalled until the 1550s, when Farnese's grandson, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, planned to turn the partially constructed building into a country house, commissioning da Vignola to use the existing foundations.

The villa is directly above the town of Caprarola and dominates its surroundings, providing a Renaissance-style opening to the Monti Cimini, a range of wooded volcanic hills. The five-sided building features buttresses to support the upper floors and has always been seen as an expression of power rather than a domestic abode.

SANTA MARIA DEI MIRACOLI

CREATED 1481-89

A true gem of Venetian Renaissance architecture, Pietro Lombardo's Santa Maria dei Miracoli was built to enshrine a miraculous Madonna and Child painting, traditionally credited to Niccolò di Pietro, but the church itself shines even brighter. With its harmonious proportions, barrel-vaulted nave, two-tiered façade, and lavish polychrome marble work and classical pilasters, the church boldly embodies Renaissance symmetry that makes it one of Venice's most beloved landmarks.

BEFORE AND BEYOND THE RENAISSANCE

Italy's creative legacy goes far beyond the Renaissance, in fact, it stretches over millennia. In Ancient Rome, architects and artists fused engineering and beauty in feats such as the Colosseum, aqueducts, and triumphal arches, while frescoes and mosaics adorned both public and private spaces. The Middle Ages brought us Romanesque and Gothic marvels, from Pisa's Leaning Tower to Venice's Basilica di San Marco. After the Renaissance, Baroque drama flourished most notably in Bernini's sculptures, Borromini's dynamic churches, and Caravaggio's strikingly intense paintings, followed by Neoclassicism's refined revival of antiquity, seen in Antonio Canova's statues and Giovanni Battista Cipriani's paintings and frescoes. In the 20th century, Futurism, Rationalist architecture, and visionaries such as Renzo Piano, Umberto Boccioni, Amedeo Modigliani, Giorgio de Chirico, Lucio Fontana, and Alberto Burri led Italian artistic innovation into the modern age, representing a rich range of styles and movements that continue to inspire and influence the world today.

10 WORLD HERITAGE SITES YOU MIGHT MISS (BUT SHOULDN'T)

SWERVE SOME OF THE MORE POPULAR HERITAGE SITES AND DISCOVER THE UNDERRATED GEMS OF ITALY'S CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

WORDS **MARK DOLAN**

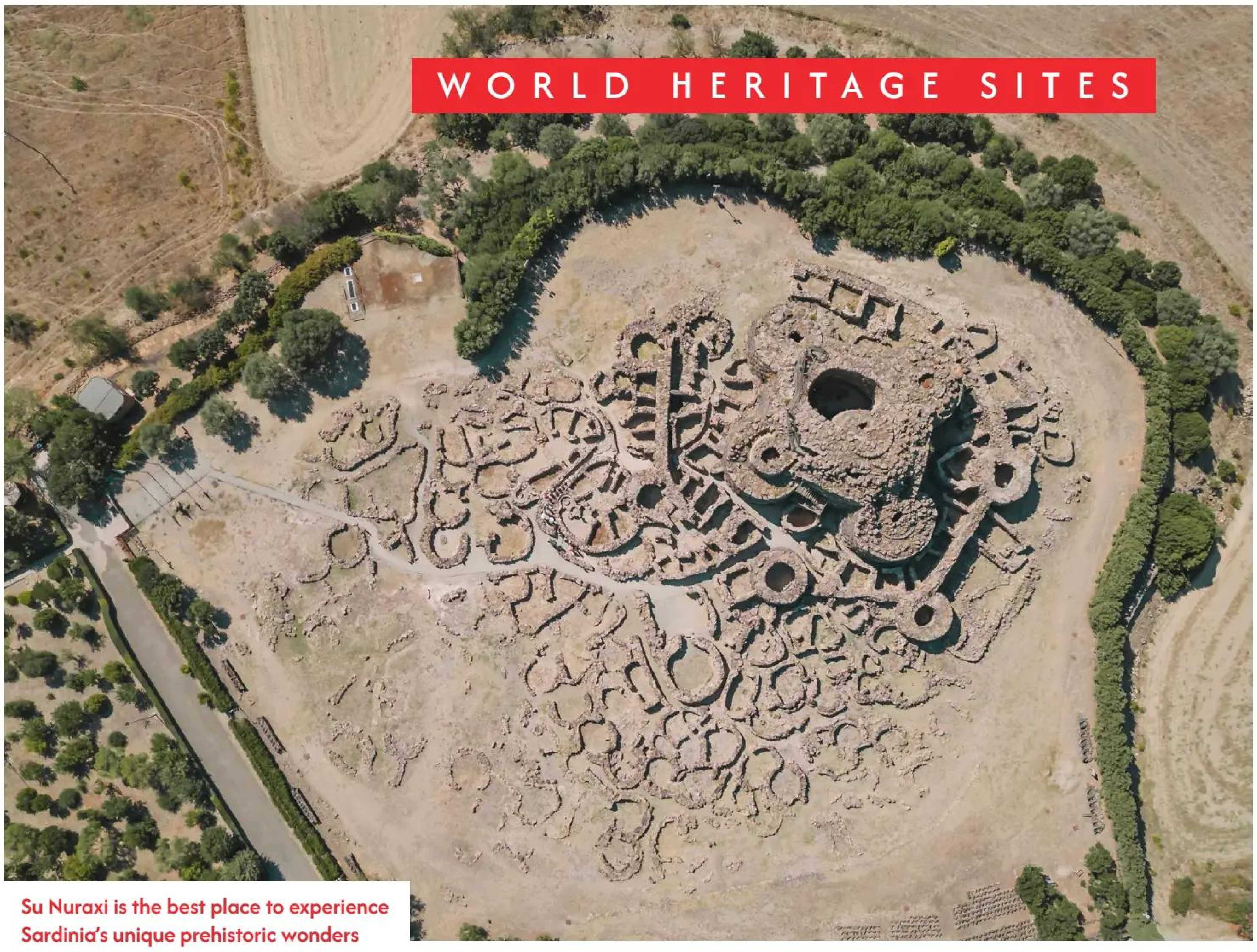
No country in the world can boast more UNESCO World Heritage Sites than Italy. It's a country where you can hardly move for beauty, history and culture, and we love it for that very reason (and the food – that doesn't hurt either). From the archaeological wonders of Pompeii and Herculaneum through to the Vatican, Italy is replete with awe-inspiring and unique locations. Some of these are very well known and popular, such as the cities of Florence, Venice and Pisa, along with natural wonders like the Dolomites, the Amalfi Coast and Mt. Etna. However, some others are less visited, perhaps overshadowed by their more famous peers. These other places, though, contain some of the most incredible, influential and beautiful sights in the country, and in many cases, the world. It is these underrated gems that we're here to guide you through.

Castel del Monte is a marriage of maths and beauty

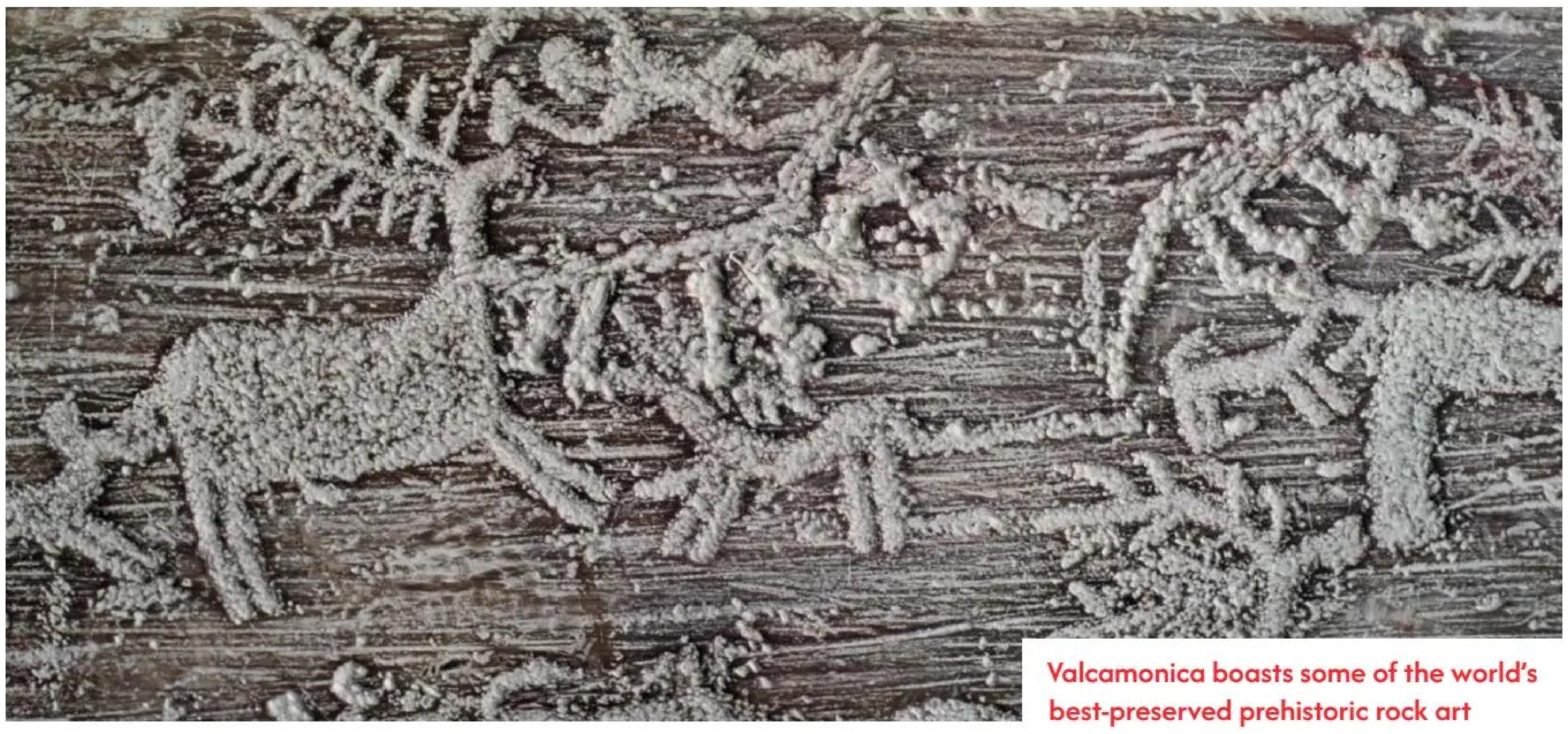
SU NURAXI DI BARUMINI

In the Bronze Age, beginning around 1600-1700 BCE, the island of Sardinia became dotted with rock-built structures known as nuraghe. These buildings, which may have functioned as domestic homes, defensive structures, elite dwellings or even ritual buildings, are unique to Sardinia.

There are over 7,000 nuraghe on Sardinia, but the best preserved complex, where you can really understand the majesty and wonder of them, is at Su Nuraxi, Barumini, in the centre of the island. Here you can see a huge complex of nuraghe, clustered around the central tower, originally 18 metres (59 feet) tall, that was inhabited from its genesis in c. 1600 BCE all the way through to the 11th century CE. Although not as well known as some of Italy's other ancient treasures, Su Nuraxi is up there with the most impressive and unique sites the country has to offer.



Su Nuraxi is the best place to experience Sardinia's unique prehistoric wonders



Valcamonica boasts some of the world's best-preserved prehistoric rock art

CASTEL DEL MONTE

An unusual medieval masterpiece, Castel del Monte is a castle that owes its unique architecture to the particular range of interests of one man: Frederick II Hohenstaufen, the Holy Roman Emperor. The castle, which sits atop an isolated hill in Puglia, is a perfectly octagonal building erected in 1240. Unlike most contemporary castles, Castel del Monte had no defensive function, with no moat, arrowslits or other military features. In fact, its purpose is still unknown to this day. What it is, though, is a work of mathematical, architectural and cultural beauty. In addition to its octagonal shape, it has octagonal towers and eight rooms per floor, possibly due to a belief in the divine associations of the number eight. In its architecture, decoration and engineering (it features hydraulics to allow for bathing according to Arabic customs), it combines Northern European, Classical and Eastern styles, ideas and traditions, reflecting Frederick's wide range of interests.

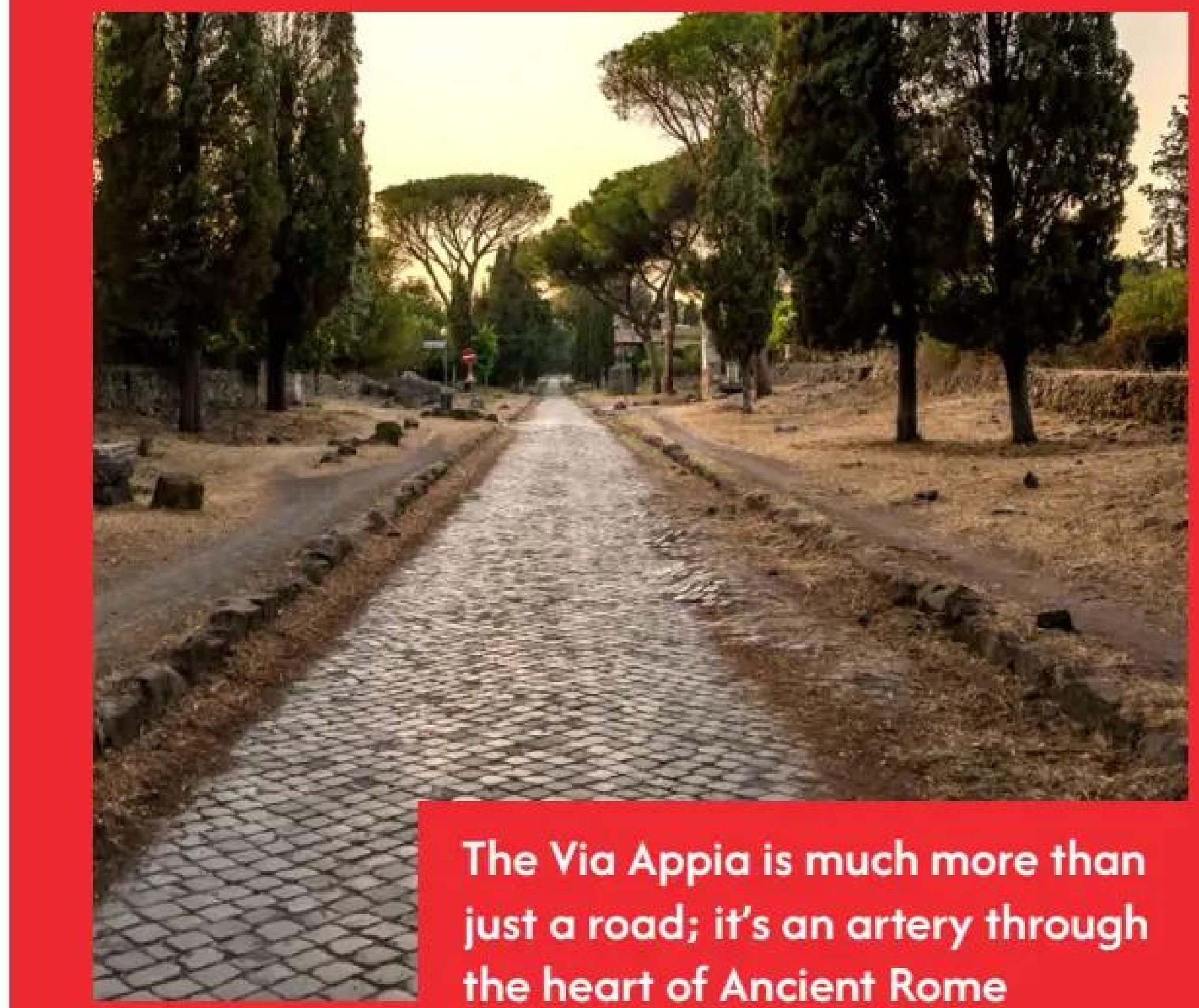
THE VALCAMONICA ROCK DRAWINGS

There aren't many places where you can look directly at 10,000 years of human life, but that is exactly what you'll find at Valcamonica. It's not only Italy's first UNESCO World Heritage Site (first listed in 1979), but the world's largest collection of prehistoric petroglyphs. Located in the Lombardy Plains, Valcamonica (or Valle Camonica) comprises thousands of inscribed rock art scenes scattered throughout the valley. As you wander along the rock faces, you'll see images of people, animals, hunting, magic and agriculture – at the very time agriculture was first being invented – as well as customs and cult rituals, chariots and warfare.

It's a window into the lives of regular people who lived, loved, worshipped and died where you're standing, thousands of years ago. The scenes let you see almost in real time how the ancient people of the region understood themselves and their world. It's an inspiring, magical place where time travel really does seem possible.

VIA APPIA

One of the world's oldest surviving roads, the Via Appia is more than just a way to get from A to B. Initially built in 312 BCE by the Consul Appius Claudius Caecus (after whom it's named) and extended over the next 700 years to its final length of more than 800 kilometres (500 metres), it was initially a strategic road for military conquests but grew into a major commercial route. Not only was it used by the likes of Julius Caesar to conduct military campaigns, but it is also where Spartacus was put to death after his failed slave revolt. It has continued to be culturally important over the centuries, as a means of spreading Christianity in the early Middle Ages, and as a key part of the Grand Tour in the 17th and 18th centuries. Not only can you still walk or cycle along this marvel of ancient engineering, but it will lead you past stunning sights, including aqueducts, catacombs and the villa of Emperor Maxentius.



The Via Appia is much more than just a road; it's an artery through the heart of Ancient Rome

Images Getty Images, Alamy

The Villa d'Este is a haven of Renaissance beauty

VILLA ADRIANA AND VILLA D'ESTE, TIVOLI

The town of Tivoli boasts two villas, separated by about 6.4 kilometres (4 miles) and 1,300 years, that showcase two of Italy's greatest architectural eras: Ancient Rome and the Renaissance. The first, Villa Adriana (Hadrian's Villa) was built by Emperor Hadrian in the 2nd century CE as a retreat from Rome. He conceived it as an 'ideal city' combining the architecture of Greece, Rome and Egypt in one complex. With 30 buildings of different ancient styles, it is a unique and fascinating mix of cultures and an insight into the power of Rome at its peak.

A short distance north sits Villa d'Este, a palace and garden built in the 16th century for Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este of Ferrara, the governor of Tivoli. It is one of the greatest masterpieces of Italian Renaissance architecture and garden design, which incorporated terraced fountains and ornamental basins, and was a major influence on ornamental gardens throughout Europe.

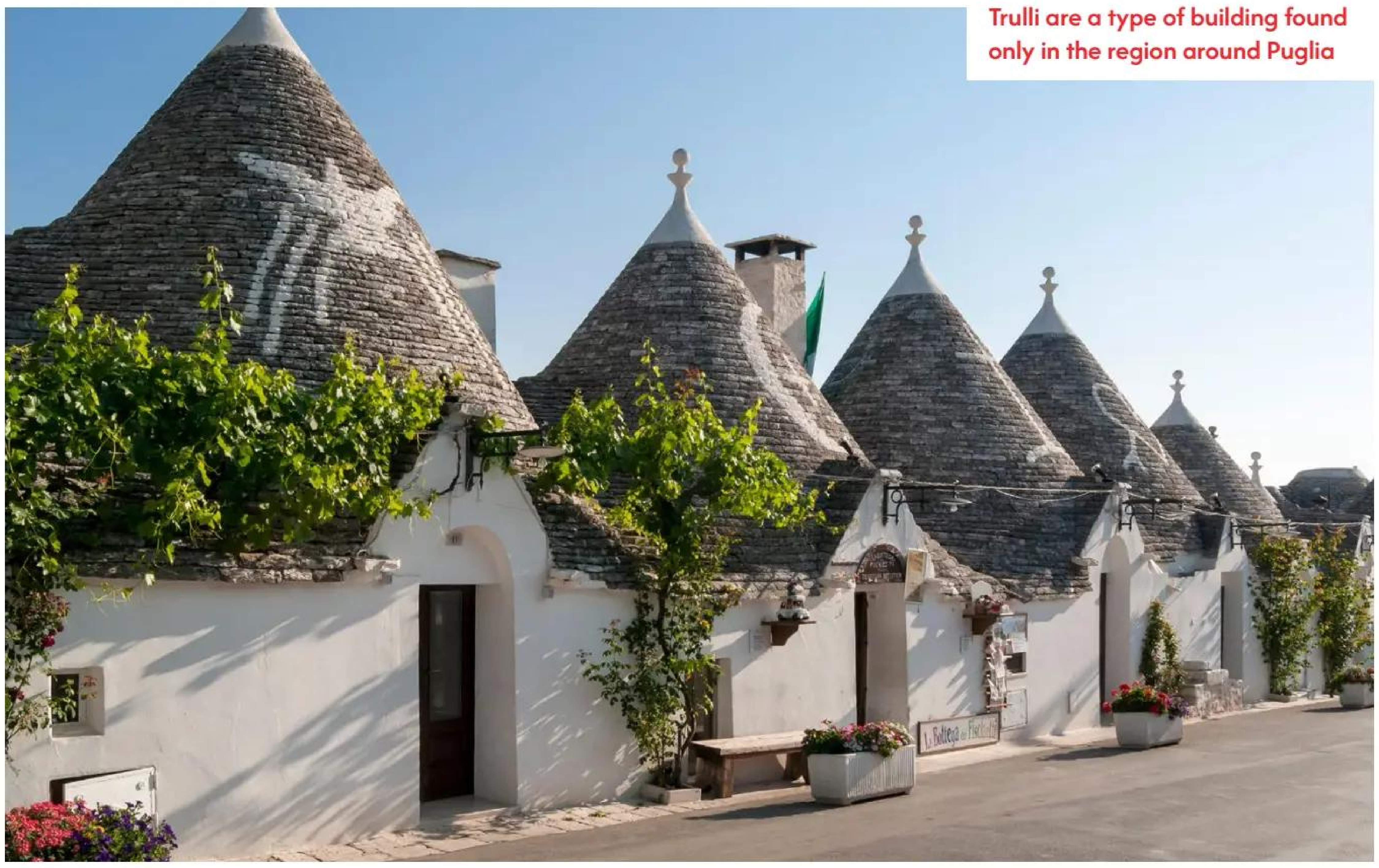
The Lombards left a huge legacy on Italian culture

THE LONGOBARDS' PLACES OF POWER

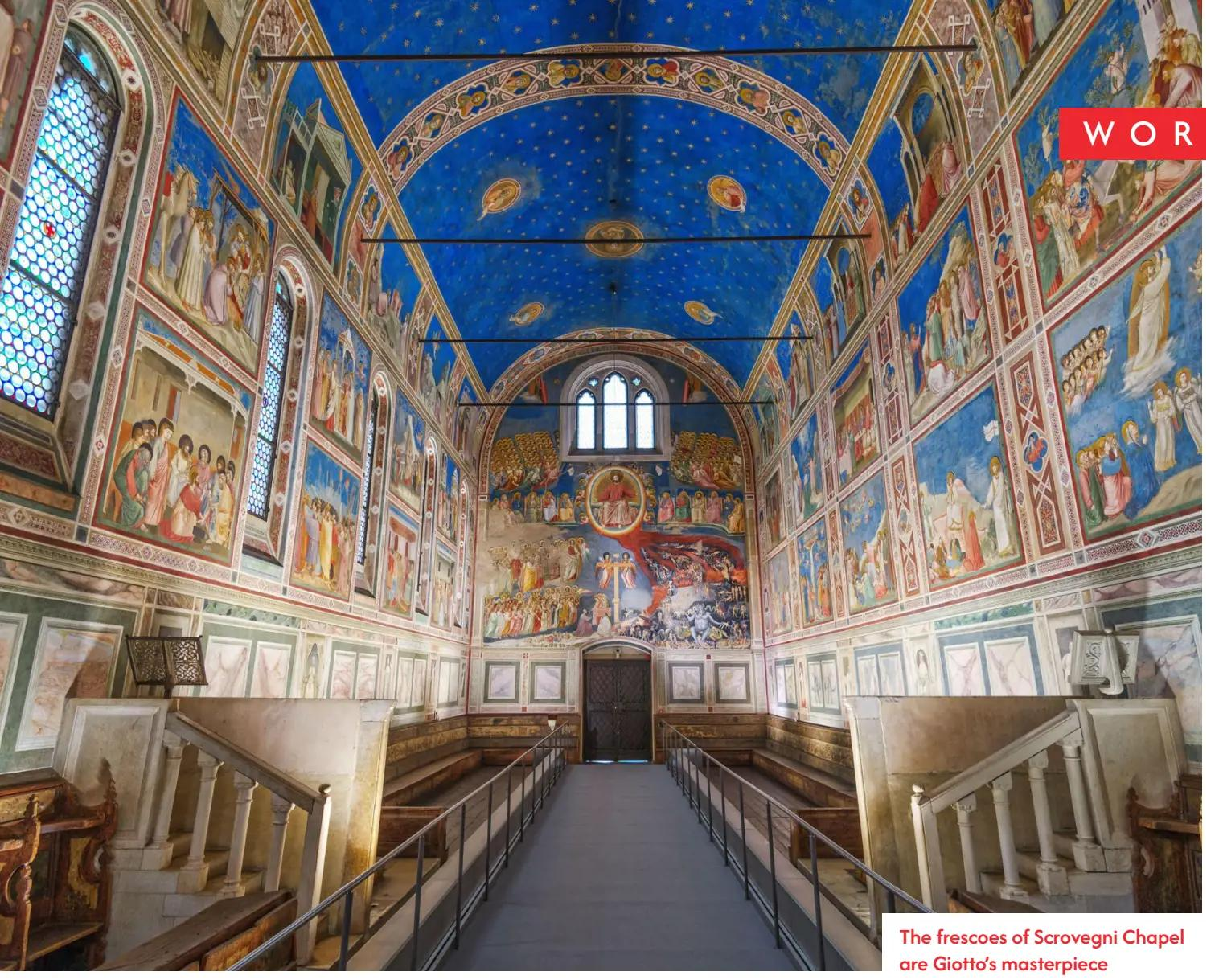
The Longobards, or Lombards, came to Italy in the 6th-8th centuries, ruled much of the country, and heralded the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Developing their own distinctive culture, with its blend of Ancient Roman heritage, Christian spirituality, Byzantine influence and Germanic culture, they left an indelible mark on Italy's culture, language and landscape. The Places of Power are seven groups of buildings, comprising churches, fortresses and monasteries, that represent the most remarkable achievements of this era of Italian history. Following the UNESCO route will take you across the country, with major highlights such as the Church of San Salvatore in Brescia, the complex at Castelseprio, a late Roman fortification adapted and reused by the Lombards, and the Tempietto del Clitunno, a Corinthian-style shrine that inspired later Renaissance masters.

THE TRULLI OF ALBEROBELLO

In the southern region of Puglia, there is a town that seems straight out of a fairytale: Alberobello. This small town is famous for its trulli: small dry-stone buildings with conical roofs constructed from the local limestone. Originally used in this area due to the ease with which they could be built and deconstructed – useful when pretending the town didn't exist for tax reasons – they have been in use since the 14th century. The buildings' characteristic conical roofs tend to conceal a domed ceiling, and the thick walls, needed due to the absence of mortar, help regulate the internal temperature. The roofs often feature mythological or religious images in white ash, and at the apex of almost every trullo is a small decorative pinnacle traditionally to ward off evil, but also an opportunity to show off; more skilled builders would add fancier decoration.



Trulli are a type of building found only in the region around Puglia



The frescoes of Scrovegni Chapel are Giotto's masterpiece

THE PADUA FRESCO CYCLES

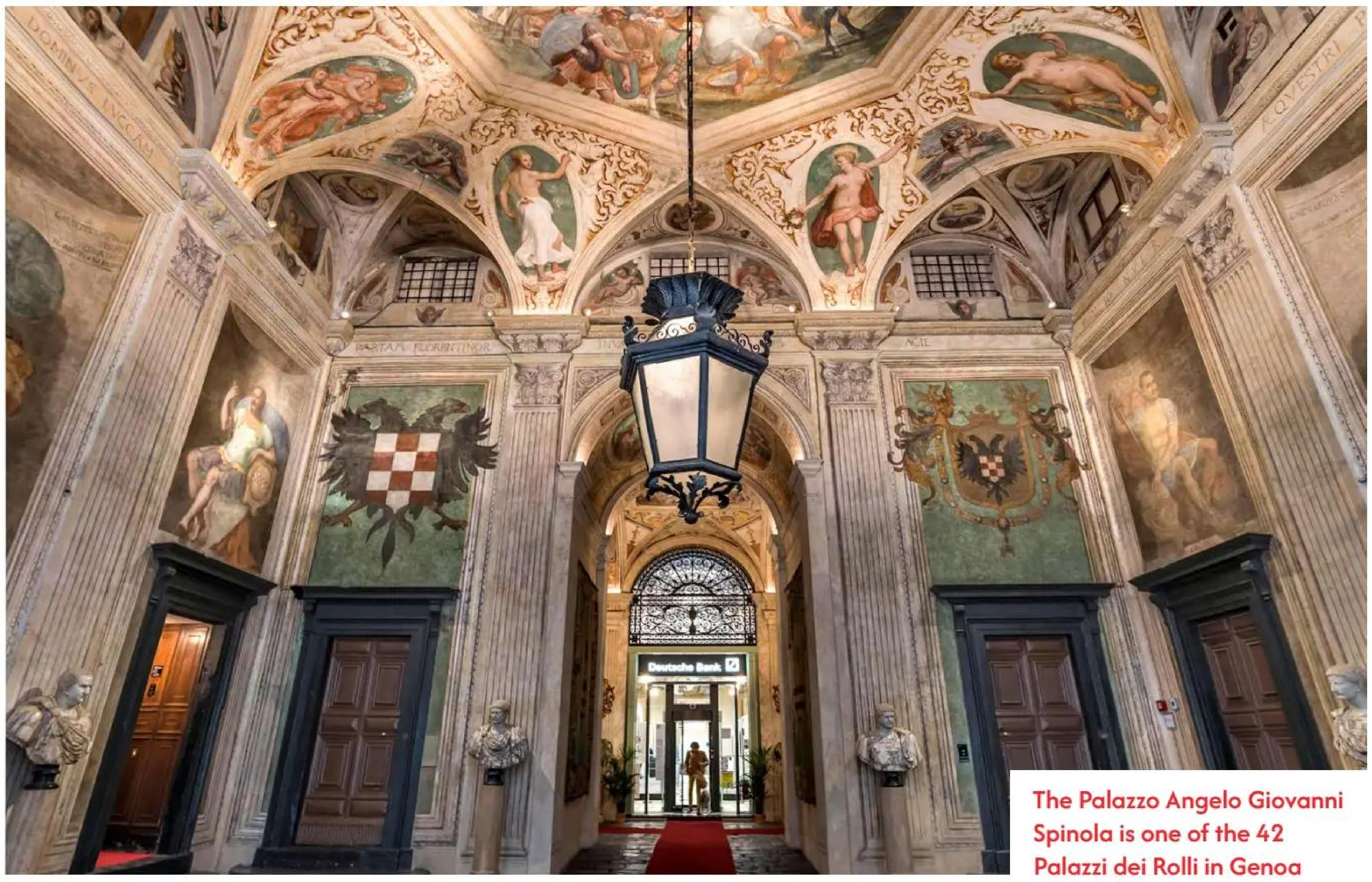
Contained within the walled city of Padua are eight building complexes decorated with fresco cycles that not only span the 14th century, but changed the course of Italian Renaissance art. The buildings are grouped into four sections, but the standout is undoubtedly Scrovegni Chapel. Considered the masterpiece of the early Renaissance artist Giotto, the chapel's walls are covered in frescoes depicting the lives of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. The rest of the cycles can be found on the walls of religious and secular buildings, including Palazzo della Ragione and the Basilica of St. Anthony, and are all masterpieces. Though produced by different artists over the course of a century, they have a uniformity of style and introduce new techniques to art history, from a new way of depicting allegorical narratives to experiments with perspective based on new developments in the science of optics.

ORTO BOTANICO, PADUA

The Botanical Garden in Padua perfectly combines beauty, culture and history, and is one of the true underrated gems of the country. Opened in 1545, it is not only the oldest botanical garden in Italy, but the world's first. It represents the birth of botanical sciences and is active in research to this day. The garden still retains its original layout, with a central circular plot symbolising the Earth, surrounded by a ring of water that represents the sea. Within its world-class herbarium are over 6,000 species of plants, including some rare specimens that have been grown there over the centuries. It is, as its Renaissance origins may suggest, a stunningly ornate place, too, with ornamental statues and intricate decorative ironwork throughout. Last but not least, it also contains one of the world's most important botanical libraries, with over 50,000 volumes of historical and bibliographic importance.

Padua's Orto Botanica is the world's first botanical garden

> "[THE PADUA FRESCO CYCLES] CHANGED THE COURSE OF ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ART



The Palazzo Angelo Giovanni Spinola is one of the 42 Palazzi dei Rolli in Genoa

GENOA'S PALAZZI DEI ROLLI AND STRADA NUOVA

It might take you more than a day to get around the entire cache of palaces that make up the World Heritage Site of the Palazzi dei Rolli, as it includes 42 palaces! Some, though, are still occupied, meaning the list of options isn't too overwhelming. The palaces were created in the 16th and 17th centuries as Genoa reached the peak of its financial and seafaring power. With the increase in the city's wealth, aristocrats set out to construct a new district of buildings to reflect their power, in the area known as Strade Nuove ('new streets'). Three of the palaces now comprise the Museums of Strada Nuova, while a fourth houses the National Gallery of Palazzo Spinola di Pellicceria. These are the best palazzi to visit to admire the Renaissance and Baroque architecture of the district, the artistic heritage of the city, and learn about its fascinating history.

Images Getty Images, Alamy

MADE IN ITALY

CRAFT, CULTURE AND CULTIVATED SELF-EXPRESSION, DISCOVER THE TIMELESS APPEAL OF ITALIAN FASHION

WORDS **GRANT FORD**

Long before Milan's front rows and global fashion weeks, Italy was a land where clothing carried weight – of status, of artistry, of cultural pride. Across the centuries, appearance has always mattered here, not out of vanity, but out of something deeper – an innate reverence for beauty and personal style.

FOUNDATIONS OF STYLE

There's something instinctive about Italian fashion – a way of being that feels both intentional and effortless. It's not just in the tailoring or accessories, but in how people carry themselves, how they move through the world. These roots run deep.

During the Renaissance, Florence became a powerhouse of textile production, exporting fine wool and silk across Europe. Venetian courtiers dazzled in brocade and velvet, while sumptuary laws dictated what citizens could wear based on status. Tailoring guilds flourished, and aristocratic families used fashion to display power, taste and influence. Clothing wasn't just personal, it was political.

When Catherine de' Medici left Florence to marry into the French royal family in 1533, she took more than a dowry – she took Italian style. From corsetry to perfume, her tastes helped shape the look of the French court, and by extension, European fashion itself. Italy wasn't following trends, it was setting them.

This fusion of craftsmanship, identity and regional pride laid the foundations for what would become a national instinct: to dress not just well, but with meaning – a legacy that still shapes the country today.

THE HOUSES THAT BUILT AN INDUSTRY

Italian fashion, like its food or cinema, became globally magnetic in the post-war decades. In 1951, Florence hosted Italy's first fashion showcase aimed at international buyers. It worked. The world began paying attention.

Soon, names like Gucci and Ferragamo became synonymous with elegance. Prada began as a Milanese leather goods shop in 1913, but under Miuccia Prada in the late 20th century, it transformed into a cerebral powerhouse. Valentino defined red-carpet

A model wearing Italian fashions in Italy in July 1951

The Giorgio Armani fashion show at the 2026 Milan Fashion Week

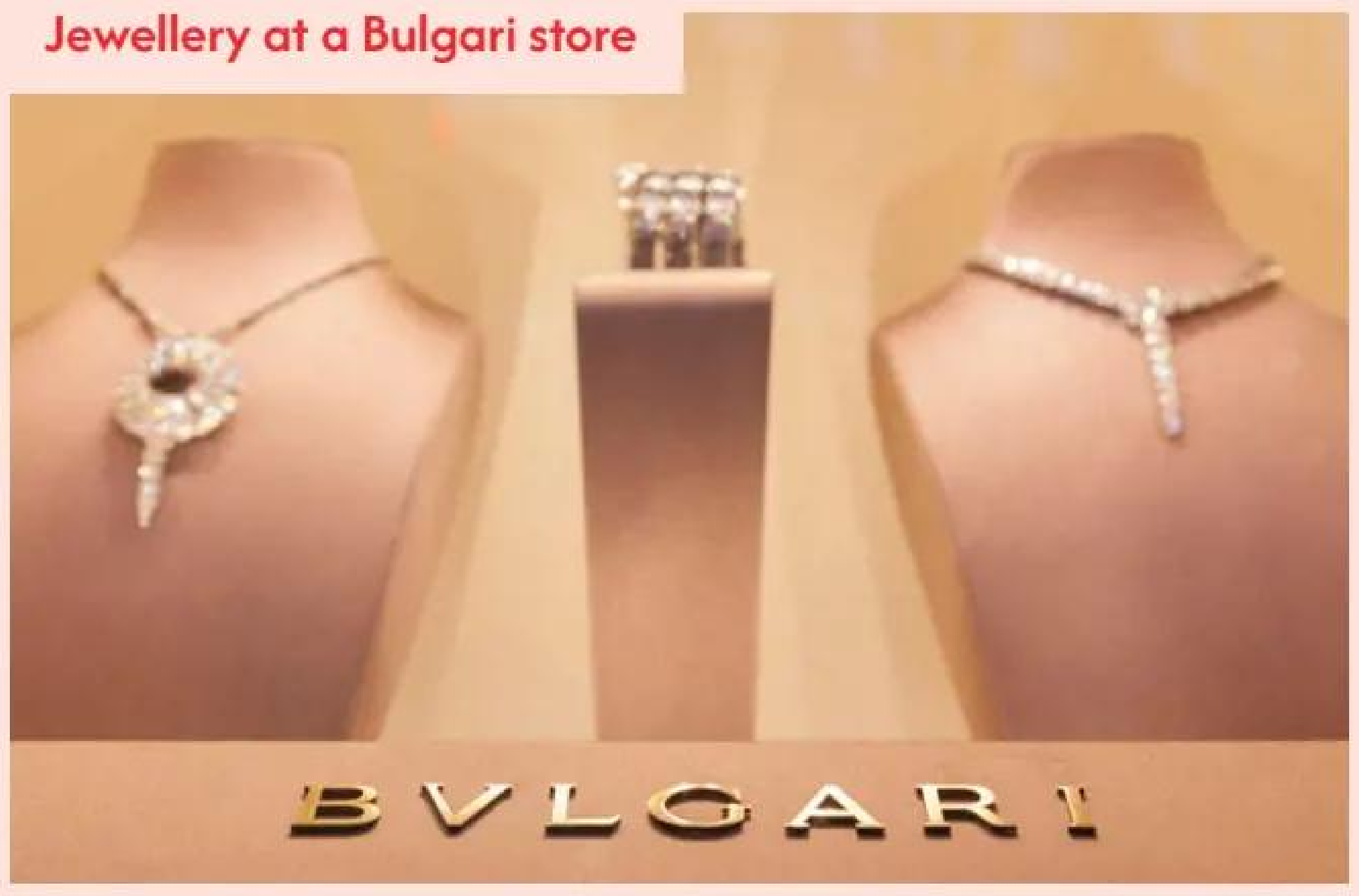
Style icons Luca Rubinacci, Lino Ieluzzi and Alessandro Squarzi demonstrating Italian style

> “IN A WORLD THAT OFTEN CELEBRATES WHAT’S NEW, ITALY STILL FINDS BEAUTY IN REPETITION, RITUAL AND DOING THINGS WELL

romance, Fendi redefined fur and handbags, and Armani reimagined suiting. Versace, with its fearless prints and bold sensuality, became shorthand for confidence. These iconic brands continue to set the standard.

And then there’s Bulgari: Italy’s crown jewel, so to speak. With roots in classical Greek and Roman art, Bulgari has long married boldness and character with impeccable craft. Its iconic Serpenti collection and gemstone-rich high jewellery pieces have adorned everyone from Elizabeth Taylor to Zendaya. A masterclass in true glamour, Bulgari continues to bridge heritage with modern expression, often blurring lines between fashion and fine art.

Every one of these brands brought (and still brings) a distinct voice and aesthetic, as well as a certain Italian-ness: impeccable construction, exceptional materials, a palpable connection to heritage and story.



Jewellery at a Bulgari store

In the 1980s and 1990s, Milan became the beating heart of the fashion world, hosting biannual showcases that rivalled Paris and New York. Today, Milan Fashion Week remains a tent pole moment for designers and dreamers – where street style spills onto catwalks and the past meets the future.

Even in the digital era, Italian houses have kept their allure by embracing the new in their own ways. The best of them – Bottega Veneta, Miu Miu, Prada, Moncler – have adapted to a contemporary visual language – one of transparency, multi-faceted storytelling and community. Behind-the-scenes glimpses, curated content, even meme-ready moments are all part of a modern luxury playbook.

But at the core is still the product: beautifully made, deeply considered, undeniably Italian.

LEGACY IN EVERY STITCH

There is permanence to Italian style. Not just in the pieces themselves – though many are built to last a lifetime – but in the philosophy behind them. Here, style is never rushed. It’s studied, passed down, deeply felt. The work of many hands and many era-defining moments.

Across the country, craft remains a kind of quiet inheritance. Tailors, shoemakers, jewellers and leather artisans continue to create not out of obligation, but out of instinct – an understanding that care, detail and discipline never go out of style. In a world that often celebrates what’s new, Italy still finds beauty in repetition and doing things well.

This is what makes the fashion of Italy more than an industry, it’s a living lineage. Every stitch carries a message and every garment holds something of the past that can be worn into the future.

It feels appropriate to end with an Italian phrase that embodies a lot of what’s been said here. *La bella figura* literally means ‘beautiful figure’, but this translation only begins to unpack its broader social context. For Italians, it represents bringing your best self – always – and not just in the way you dress. Etiquette, grooming, body language, personal touches – a way of navigating life gracefully. Something we can all take a little from.

STEP INTO LA PASSEGGIATA

How Italians turned the evening stroll into a treasured ritual of style and symbolism

La passeggiata is a longstanding Italian tradition - an early evening stroll, typically taken through the town’s main street or piazza, just before or after dinner. More than just a walk, it’s a social ritual dating back to Renaissance Italy when nobility would parade town squares in their finest attire - a means to display their wealth and status. Thankfully, this procession has evolved to become something far more meaningful. It’s about being seen and looking good, but it’s also about community, connection and regional pride.

As with all things regarding national culture and its codes, there are geographical differences for the *passeggiata*, reflecting Italy’s rich tapestry and the strength of identity within each region. For example, in Florence there’s a more formal, elegant and historic feel, whereas in a city like Naples, there’s vibrancy, soul and a sense of celebration.

There’s a quote from the famous designer Marc Jacobs that feels especially apt: “Life is a fashion now; the world is your runway”.

From Rome to Milan, Taormina to Turin, locals dress with intention, effortlessly combining ease with precision. In this way, the *passeggiata* embodies *la bella figura*. It reflects how fashion in Italy exists far beyond runways and showrooms. It’s lived and worn daily, not just consumed. In the *passeggiata*, you see that mindset in action - fashion not as performance, but as quiet pride and cultural identity.

More than a tradition, it’s a gentle reminder that great style doesn’t always need an occasion.

Images Getty Images, Alamy

MUSIC & ITALY
A STORY OF INVENTION

FROM PAGANINI TO PAVAROTTI, PIANOFORTES TO PAUSINI, ITALY HAS BEEN A TINDERBOX FOR ALL THINGS MUSICAL

WORDS **JAMES GRIMSHAW**

Images Getty Images

The story of Italy is, in so many ways, a story of invention. Elsewhere in these pages you'll have learned of the great strides made in art, food, architecture and engineering; of luminary minds and their singular devotions; and of humble discoveries that gave way to global phenomena.

The story of Italy's music is much the same. It is a story of strings and sopranos, of visionaries, eccentrics and enthusiasts, adding bricks to a crucible of modern civilisation. Where to begin?!

A PIONEERING PENINSULA

Italy's history of musical innovation and expression starts early, but some of its most instrumental inventions were exactly that: instruments. Orchestras, quite simply, would not sound the same without the assuredly Mediterranean development of several four-stringed mainstays – the violin, the viola, cello and double bass.

Bowed instruments such as these had existed in varying forms for centuries beforehand, but it was only in the early 1500s that our familiar f-holed friends would take their instantly-recognisable shapes, and change the shape of music to come. Two centuries hence, though, Italian inventor and instrument-maker, Bartolomeo Cristofori, would bring the music world something altogether more foundational.

Cristofori was hired by Prince Ferdinando de Medici in the late 1600s, ostensibly to maintain his broad collection of musical instruments that had been amassed from far and wide. It was during this time on the Medici estate in Florence that Cristofori pioneered a new instrument, which would go on to become the most important musical instrument of our time: the piano.

Again, keyboard instruments like the harpsichord had existed for some time before Cristofori came along, but were limited in their dynamic capabilities. The name 'piano' comes from *pianoforte*, itself a combination of an early description of the piano's unique ability: to sound notes dynamically from *piano* (soft) to forte (loud).

PLAYING THE CLASSICS

Instruments are but the catalyst for musical invention – and Italy's musical inventions are, unsurprisingly, vast. Perhaps the most significant of these comes from Jacopo Peri, a Florentine singer of the late 16th century. He embodied the Renaissance era, with compositions that re-trod the hallowed ground of Greek storytelling. These early works placed tragedian tales in the hands of solo singers, performing over a modest ensemble of early orchestral instruments – and thus, what we know as opera was born.

Since then, opera has become a titanic artform all of its own, and a titanic cultural signifier to boot. Its traditions, hallmarks and practices have been not just upheld, but also shared with ever-widening audiences by modern operatic heavyweights like Luciano Pavarotti and Cecilia Bartoli. But this bombastic present-day form was only realised over time, and with thanks to the string section, the piano and the proliferation of the printing press. What we now understand to be 'classical' music is actually the story of

This painting by Michelangelo (*Anselmi, Apollo and Marsyas*), is one of the earliest depictions of the violin in Italian art

centuries – starting with the Baroque, and then with the trailblazing compositional work of Claudio Monteverdi.

Vivaldi would follow, and the floodgates would open to the Classical era of the 18th century, with all its symphonic beauty and its corresponding lewdness. Niccolo Paganini was at once a virtuoso violinist and a prodigious libertine, thankfully remembered more for his furthering of the violin-ic arts than his crude slapstick compositions.

Soon followed the Romantic era, and the soaring richness of a full operatic orchestra. For this decadence, we may thank Giuseppe Verdi and his famed opera *La Traviata*, then Giacomo Puccini after him. Italy's impact on classical music is, to say the least, totemic.

RADIO STAR

As the end of the 19th century loomed, though, so too did a new epoch in music – via an enterprising Italian inventor called Guglielmo Marconi, who made some serious strides in long-distance wireless communication. These discoveries ultimately went on to produce one of the most significant inventions in the history of music: the radio.

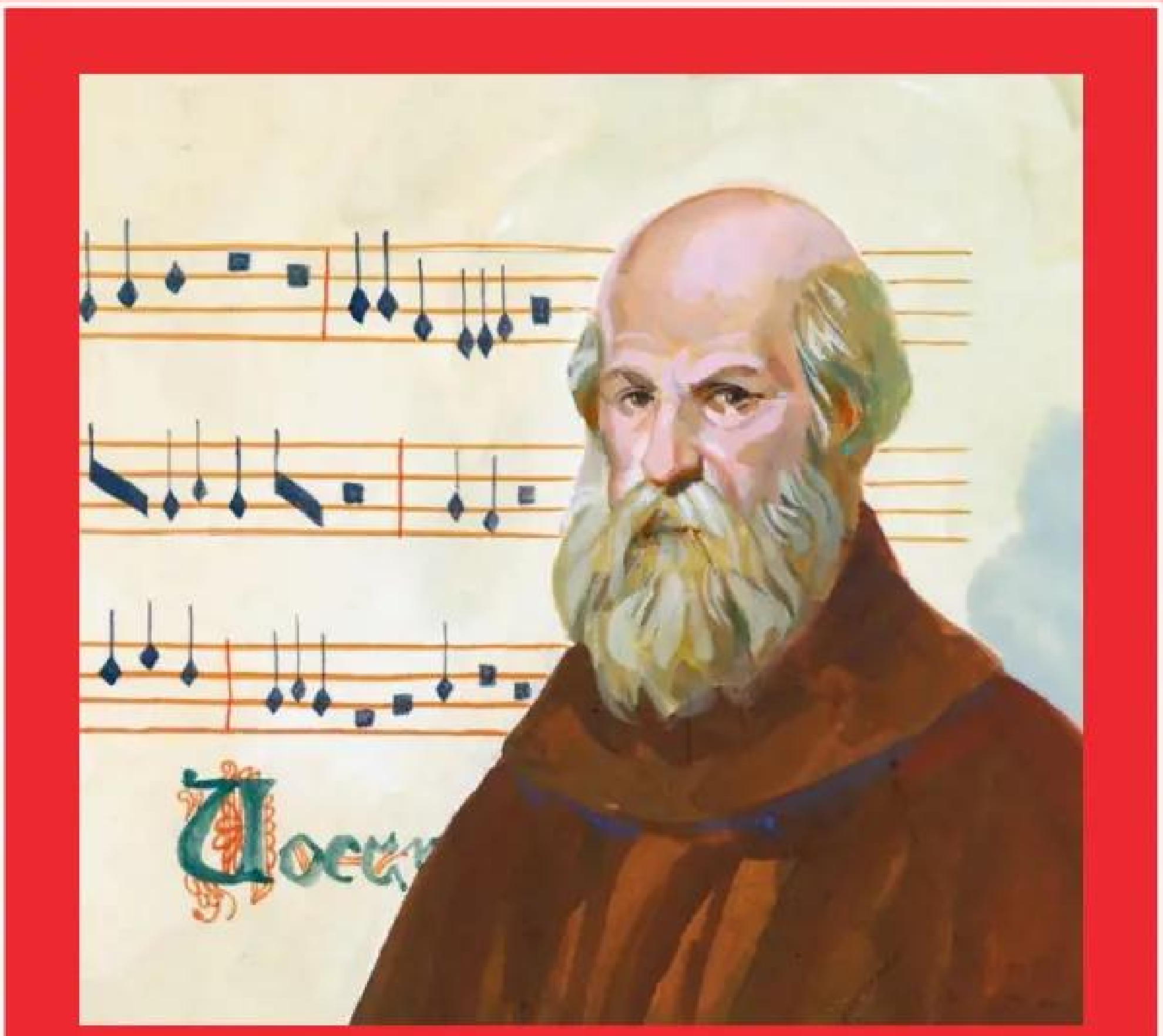
The sudden and global distribution of recorded music made for an unprecedented melting pot of connected creative inspiration. While America and the UK led the charge with early pop music, mid-20th-century Italy was definitely listening.

It's safe to say, though, that Italian musicians did far more that re-state the status quo of popular music from elsewhere – most recognisably, through the emergence of electronic music in the 1970s and 1980s. Italian manufacturers like Farfisa and Bontempi democratised access to the tools of Western pop, heralding a bloom of home-grown electronica that gained its own distinctive identity. Welcome to Italo disco!

It is somewhat ironic that the Italo disco genre developed from the success of disco and electronica elsewhere in Europe, since disco was pioneered by one of Italy's own: Giorgio Moroder. This disco godfather is responsible for some of the most famous pop songs in history, from Donna Summer's disco catalogue to Blondie, Bowie, Berlin and beyond. In this way, the story of Italy's music is truly a global one – before we even consider the global impact of modern Italian voices.

Andrea Bocelli, for instance, is one of the most internationally-recognised tenor voices of the classical scene. Meanwhile, breakout 90s pop-singing sensations, Eros Ramazzotti and Laura Pausini, each found global audiences of their own. Pausini in particular, with 1993 hit single 'La Solitudine', demonstrated that Italian voices, and Italian language, were just as capable of swaying international charts as American rock-n-roll was on the Italian airwaves back in the 1950s – closing the circle on a centuries-long story of musical invention and inspiration.

Of course, we've barely scratched the surface of Italy's inexpressibly deep relationship with music here. From the innumerable Italian composers that continue to define the form to the thriving independent music scenes bubbling up in each Italian city, Italy's story of invention is far from finished.



DULY NOTED

Italy's musical inventions were far more than instrumental…

Italy's foundational knack for invention goes further back than you may expect. Indeed, it goes right back to the beginnings of written music in the West. Staff notation - the contemporary Western standard for written music - is the result of some sterling 11th-century innovations by medieval monastic muso Guido D'Arezzo, who sought to make it easier for singers to learn and perform choral pieces.

Guido didn't stop with notation, either; he pioneered solfege, the 'do-re-mi' mnemonic for understanding your place in a musical scale. These inventions have since been iterated and improved significantly, but without the enterprising efforts of one forward-thinking theologian, the pace of global musical innovation could well have been set back by centuries. Thanks, Guido!

This piano is one of the only surviving pieces by Bartolomeo Cristofori – and one of the first pianos ever made

Giorgio Moroder, aka The Godfather of Disco, lords over his global dominion of groovy pop

> "THE STORY OF ITALY'S MUSIC IS THE STORY OF STRINGS AND SOPRANOS, OF MARCONI AND MORODER

A young Luciano Pavarotti, renowned operatic tenor, performs in a 1987 staging of Verdi's *La Traviata*

NARRATING

FROM VILLAGE SCREENINGS TO GLOBAL ACCLAIM, DISCOVER THE RISE, RHYTHM AND LASTING CULTURAL LEGACY OF ITALIAN CINEMA

WORDS **GRANT FORD**

For most lovers of modern cinema, Italy holds a very special place in their hearts. It's a deeply evocative country that offers a refreshing departure from mainstream movies, and has profoundly influenced global filmmaking and culture, drawing considerably from the nation's deep literary and theatre traditions.

FORMATIVE YEARS

In 1895, Filoteo Alberini received a patent for the Kinetograph, a device for making, printing and projecting moving images – widely considered the beginning of Italian cinema. A year later, on 13 March 1896, the country held its first film screening in Rome using the Lumière Cinématographe.

This moment ignited domestic filmmaking not just as art, but as grand entertainment. By 1905, Alberini had directed *The Capture of Rome*, and by the 1910s, epics like *Cabiria* (1914) were reaching audiences beyond Italy.

As silent films gave way to talkies in the late 1920s, Italian cinema evolved in step, developing a voice and vision of its own. By 1932, the Venice Film Festival had been established, confirming the country's place on the world stage.

Under fascism in the 1930s, cinema became a vehicle for propaganda, but also received substantial state funding. The launch of Cinecittà in 1937 marked Mussolini's answer to Hollywood – a state-of-the-art studio that produced glossy, escapist *telefoni bianchi* (white telephone) films. These played across cities and rural towns, often via government-run mobile cinemas, until the outbreak of war brought this era to a close.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF ITALIAN CINEMA

In the wake of war and the years that followed, Italy was rebuilding in so many ways. There was now a new context for what stories about Italy and Italians could mean. Enter Italian Neorealism and the rise of the auteur.

Directors such as Luciano Visconti, Vittoria De Sica and Roberto Rossellini strived to depict the real people, places and poverty of their homeland following the hardships of war – something that was previously non-existent on the big screen. Movies such as *Rome, Open City* (1945), *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) and *La Terra Trema* (1948) transformed the art form with its cinematography, social realism and non-traditional approach to filmmaking, influencing hugely significant movements such as the French New Wave and modern independent film.

THE RISE OF THE AUTEUR

By the 1960s, Italy had become a powerhouse of cinematic innovation, led by visionary directors like Federico Fellini and Michelangelo Antonioni. Fellini, influenced

Actors Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg in *La Dolce Vita*, 1960

> “BY THE 1960s, ITALY HAD BECOME A POWERHOUSE OF CINEMATIC INNOVATION, LED BY VISIONARY DIRECTORS

DUX
NEMATOGRAFIA E L ARMA PIU' FORTE
Rome, April 1937. The then Italian prime minister, Benito Mussolini, inaugurating the Cinecittà studios

A NATION

by Nobel Prize-winning playwright Luigi Pirandello, brought surrealism into mainstream cinema, blending fantasy and realism in iconic works like *La Dolce Vita* (1960) – which first coined the term 'paparazzi' – and *8½* (1963), both hailed among the greatest films ever made.

Meanwhile, Antonioni reshaped arthouse cinema with his 'trilogy on modernity and its discontents' – *L'Avventura* (1960), *La Notte* (1961), and *L'Eclisse* (1963) – before crossing into the international scene with *Blow-Up* (1966), a psychological thriller set in Swinging Sixties London. Like Fellini, Antonioni drew from literary influences, particularly Italo Svevo, a pioneer of the psychological novel, enriching his films with intellectual depth and stylistic boldness.

This was a seminal era for Italian genre cinema and its filmmakers. Among the most timeless and stylistic contributions were Sergio Leone's Spaghetti Westerns, whose distinctive landscapes, tone, and Ennio Morricone score continue to leave a lasting mark on popular culture.

TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS

With a decline in domestic and international success from the late 1970s and well into the 1980s, the Italian film industry faced a crisis of multiple causes. Lack of funding and technology, Hollywood domination and a dilution of national character have been attributed to the downturn.

This marginalisation of Italian national cinema, limiting circulation and a tech-gap when compared to better-funded countries are issues that have continued to dominate the conversation in Italy, despite some very prominent successes along the way. *Cinema Paradiso* (1988) – winner of 25 awards worldwide, including Best Foreign Language Film Oscar at the 1990 Academy Awards – is one such example: a nostalgic coming-of-age drama from director Giuseppe Tornatore. So too are *Il Postino* (1994) and *Life Is Beautiful* (1997) – both of which received international acclaim, awards, and offered a strong reminder of Italy's filmmaking provenance and creative spirit.

There is of course *The Godfather* trilogy, from American director Francis Ford Coppola, which almost needs no introduction. The son of second-generation immigrants, his violent tale of mafia, family and Italian-American culture is widely regarded as one of the finest of all time.

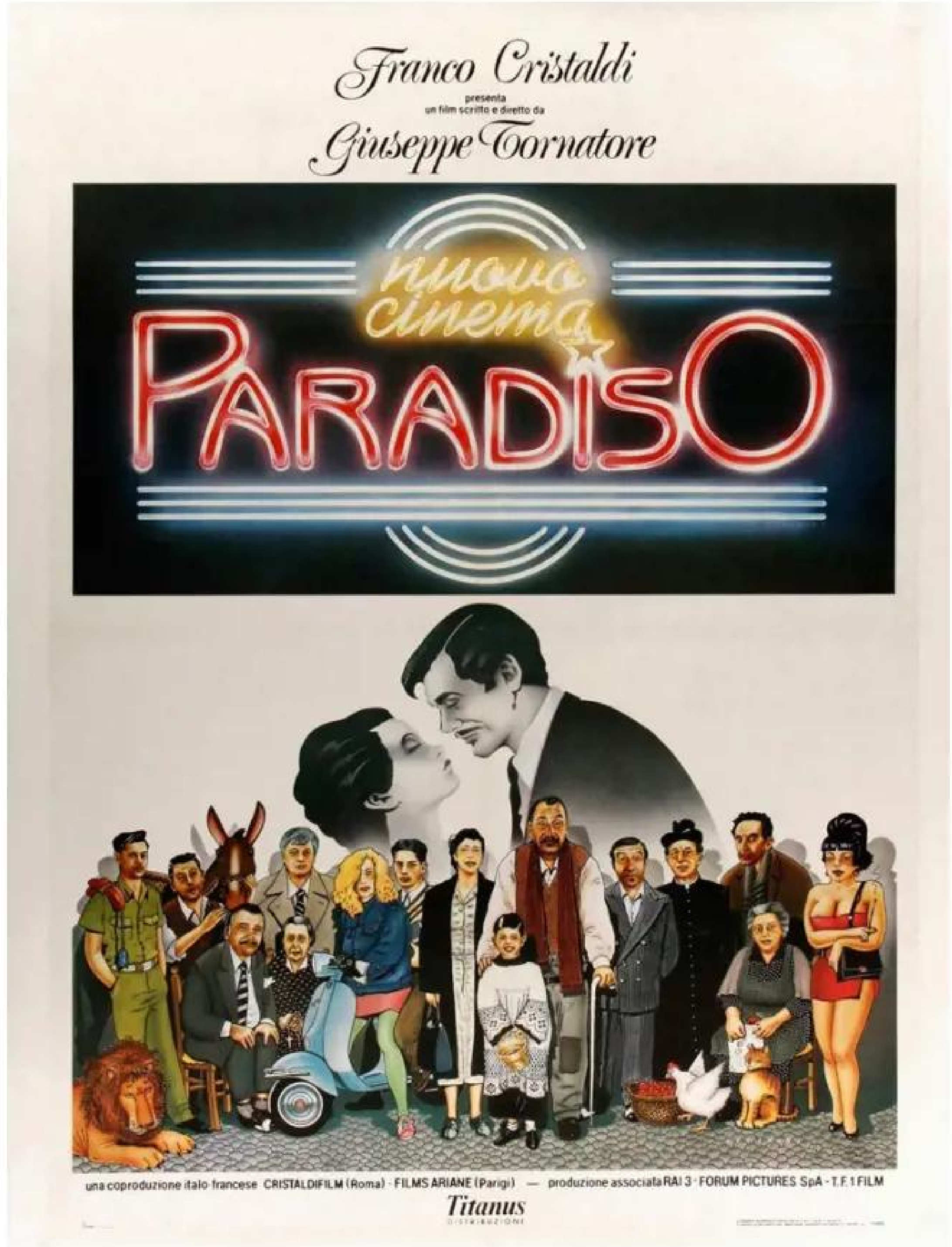
A NEW GENERATION

As the 2000s gave way to the 2010s and beyond, the transformation into the digital age made the world feel more accessible. With that came a renewed appreciation for Italian cinema culture. Hidden gems, classic masterpieces and bold new voices suddenly found fresh audiences across social platforms and later on streaming services. Italy's rich heritage of style, storytelling and striking landscapes were once again being celebrated on a global scale.

This resurgence ushered in a new wave of filmmakers redefining Italian identity for contemporary audiences. Paolo Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty* (2013) epitomises his trademark mix of satirical edge and grand, operatic visuals, offering a modern echo of Fellini. Alice Rohrwacher, with *La Chimera* (2023), brings a lyrical, fable-like quality to her work, blending Neorealism with wonder and exploring themes like family, community and faith through a distinctly female lens.

Luca Guadagnino has bridged Italian artistry with Hollywood reach, delivering emotionally layered films such as *A Bigger Splash* (2015), *Call Me by Your Name* (2017), *Challengers* (2024) and *Queer* (2024). His work blurs borders and genres while staying grounded in a uniquely Italian sensibility.

History, passion, success, failure – it's impossible to capture this immense cinematic journey in just these pages, but we hope it's given you a taste for further Italian celluloid exploration. *Buona fortuna*!



CHALLENGERS

Challengers director, Luca Guadagnino, with cast members Mike Faist, Josh O'Connor and Zendaya

LITERARY ROOTS: HOW ITALY SHAPED THE STORIES WE TELL

Italy has long been a land of inspiration, not just for filmmakers, but for writers, poets and playwrights the world over

For William Shakespeare, Italy was more than a setting - it was a place of passion, politics and poetry. Of his 38 plays, over a third are set in Italy, from the star-crossed lovers of Romeo and Juliet in Verona to the betrayal and intrigue of Othello in Venice. Italian culture gave Shakespeare the perfect stage to explore universal themes - love, ambition, jealousy - all set against rich and evocative backdrops.

Centuries before Shakespeare put quill to page, Italy had already begun shaping the Western literary canon. Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, written in the early 14th century, changed the course of literature. His layered vision of the afterlife, full of moral depth and poetry, continues to echo across storytelling in every medium.

From Dante to Pirandello, Machiavelli to Svevo, Italy has always been more than a location. It is a creative force whose influence stretches far beyond the written word.

That legacy and influence across the arts continues today. Elena Ferrante's *Neapolitan Novels* captivated global audiences and led to a 2021 screen adaptation of *The Lost Daughter* (2006), which premiered at the 78th Venice Film Festival. Tackling deeper social issues, Roberto Saviano's *Gomorrah* (2006) exposed the realities of organised crime and went on to inspire both a film and TV series.

Italy's stories endure because they're built on centuries of truth, beauty, and unflinching honesty - the same qualities that continue to define its cinema.

Images Getty Images, Alamy

INVEN

Image Getty Images

INVENTIONS

ICONS ON

WHETHER FOR THE TRACK, THE GRAND TOUR, OR THE DAILY COMMUTE, THESE ITALIAN ICONS EMBODY THEIR NATION'S BELIEF THAT DRIVING SHOULD STIR THE SOUL AS MUCH AS IT MOVES THE BODY...

WORDS NATALIE DENTON

From Rome's bustling streets to Portofino's coastal highways, Italy's automotive mainstays and masterpiece-making marques are celebrated not only for their distinctive, often flamboyant designs that place beauty and emotion at the heart of engineering, but also for their unrivalled ability to fuse luxury, meticulous craftsmanship, and attention to detail with a passion for performance. For Italians, cars are more than mere transport – they're cultural icons, expressions of national pride, and moving works of art. So, from the roar of Formula 1 engines at Monza, to the buzz-like hum of Vespas in sunlit piazzas, Italy's motoring heritage celebrates speed, style, and soul, and is one that shows no sign of slowing down.

FIAT

Short for Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino, Fiat was founded in 1899 in Turin by Giovanni Agnelli, and from its first car, the 3 1/2 HP, the brand quickly became Italy's dominant automaker. In fact, by the 1920s it was estimated that Fiat controlled 80 per cent of the domestic market, and in 1923 it opened its now-iconic Lingotto factory, a five-storey marvel where newly built Fiats are still driven straight onto a rooftop oval track for high-speed testing. Post-war icons like the Fiat 500 and Fiat 600 made stylish motoring affordable, while the rally-winning 131 Abarth and luxury collaborations, such as the Ferrari-engined Dino, showcased its versatility, while much-beloved classics like the Panda, and 124 Spider cement Fiat's legacy as a true Italian icon. To find out more, take a trip to Turin's Museo Nazionale dell'Automobile.

Although *fiat* means 'let it be' in Latin, it actually stands for Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino

THE FIAT 500 (NUOVA 500)

1 Tiny, lightweight, and nippy, it was ideal for weaving through narrow cobbled streets, parking in cramped piazzas, and zipping along the coast.

2 Launched in Italy's post-war boom, it embodied 50s-60s style and optimism, becoming a chic, carefree symbol of *la dolce vita*.

3 Introduced in 1957, the original model inspired a 2007 revival, which scooped more than 40 major automotive design awards.

WHEELS

MASERATI

Maserati wasn't the result of one man's vision, but four, founded in Bologna in 1914 by the Maserati brothers: Alfieri, Bindo, Ettore and Ernesto, while their brother Mario designed the famous trident emblem in homage to the city's *Fountain of Neptune*. Their first racing car, the Tipo 26, made its debut at the gruelling 1926 Targa Florio endurance race in Sicily, winning its class and putting Maserati firmly on the motorsport map. In 1940 the company relocated its factory to Modena, shifting from building pure race cars to crafting elegant grand tourers such as the 3500 GT, Ghibli, and Quattroporte. It still enjoyed racing success however, most notably in 1957 when Argentine driver Juan Manuel Fangio claimed the Formula 1 World Championship in the legendary Maserati 250F. While heritage tours still take place in Modena, the brand is now part of Stellantis, embracing electrification with its Folgore models.

ALFA ROMEO

Originally christened A.L.F.A. (Anonima Lombarda Fabbrica Automobili) by a group of investors led by aristocrat Ugo Stella in 1910, the company wouldn't gain the name that has endured for over a century until 1915, when engineer and entrepreneur Nicola Romeo took control and made it his own by renaming it Alfa Romeo. By 1920, the Torpedo 20-30 HP marked a new era, while its sportier ES version signalled Alfa Romeo's rise to racing glory at the Targa Florio, Mille Miglia, and Le Mans. Classics like the 6C 1750, 8C 2900, Giulietta and Duetto Spider blended Italian style with speed, while modern standouts like the 4C and Giulia Quadrifoglio prove that, just like its *biscione* emblem (a crowned serpent swallowing a man), the manufacturer still has plenty of bite. Today, SUVs like the Stelvio and Tonale carry Alfa Romeo's flair into new markets, while its storied past lives on at the Alfa Romeo Museum in Arese.

LAMBORGHINI

As the saying goes, "If you want something done right, do it yourself," and that's why Ferruccio Lamborghini, founder of a successful tractor manufacturing business, established Automobili Lamborghini S.p.A. in 1963 in Sant'Agata Bolognese. Dissatisfied with the comfort and refinement of his Ferrari 250 GT, Ferruccio wanted something that went fast but also felt smooth, so he set out to build a grand tourer that combined luxury with blistering performance. The result was the prototype 350 GTV, unveiled in 1963, which evolved into the production of the 350 GT in 1964. From the groundbreaking Miura to the Countach, Diablo, and today's hybrid Revuelto, Lamborghini has delivered bold, dramatic machines time and again. Now under Audi ownership, fans can still explore its independent history at the Museo Lamborghini in Sant'Agata Bolognese or the Museo Ferruccio Lamborghini nearby.

VESPA

Italian for 'wasp', Vespa was launched in 1946 by Piaggio in Pontedera, Tuscany, when engineer Corradino D'Ascanio created a light, enclosed scooter for post-war Italy. The first 98cc Vespa offered weather protection, style and practicality, sparking a two-wheel revolution perfect for weaving through crowded city streets. Its fame soared in 1953 when *Roman Holiday*, starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck, introduced the Vespa 125 to the world stage, and by the 1960s it had become the ultimate Mod must-have. Legendary models like the 150 GS, 125 Primavera, PX series, and modern GTS explain why more than 19 million have been sold in 83 countries, while the electric Vespa Elettrica carries the brand into the future. Its story is celebrated at the Museo Piaggio in Pontedera, where the scooter's evolution and cultural impact take centre stage.

The name Vespa was coined thanks to the scooter's distinctive insect shape and buzzing engine

VESPA 125

1. Featuring a more powerful engine than earlier models, the 1948 Vespa 125 was perfect for longer city rides or carefree weekend escapes to the countryside.
2. With its step-through design, enclosed engine, and front leg shield, the Vespa 125 kept riders' clothes clean and dry, appealing to its style-conscious demographic.
3. The worldwide Vespa craze kicked off from the mid-1950s, with a worldwide manufacturing licence leading to 4 million units being sold by 1970.
4. Sleek, curvaceous bodywork and pastel colour options gave the Vespa 125 a distinctive, fashionable look, that was instantly recognisable and perfectly aligned Italy's post-war style revival.
5. Affordable, easy to ride, and economical to run, the Vespa 125 came to symbolise freedom and fun for a new generation, becoming as much a lifestyle statement as a vehicle.

Images Getty Images

FERRARI 250 GTO

1. Only 36 Ferrari 250 GTOs were ever built, and because of this extreme rarity, combined with its legendary racing success and timeless design, it's one of the most coveted collector cars in history, commanding record-breaking auction prices decades after its debut. In fact in 2018, a 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO sold at auction for over $48 million, setting a record at the time, while private sales have since exceeded $70 million.

2. The Ferrari 250 GTO, built between 1962 and 1964, was born to race! Specifically engineered for FIA Group 3 Grand Touring, it won the International Championship for GT Manufacturers three years running, proving unbeatable in speed, agility, and performance on the world's most demanding circuits.

3. Not just anyone could buy a 250 GTO, as Enzo Ferrari himself insisted on personally vetting every single prospective owner, favouring loyal customers, seasoned racing drivers, and those who shared his passion for performance. This exclusivity only deepened the car's mystique, ensuring that from the very start, Ferrari was synonymous with prestige, performance, and a fiercely loyal elite.

4. The 250 GTO bore Ferrari's *Cavallino Rampante* (its famous prancing horse), inspired by Italian WWI flying ace Francesco Baracca, whose personal symbol was gifted to Enzo Ferrari by Baracca's parents in 1923 for good luck, and became the defining badge of Ferrari road cars from 1947 onward.

5. Under the bonnet sat a 3.0-litre V12 engine producing 300 horsepower and it had a 5-speed manual gearbox. Weighing just 880kg (1,940lbs), it could reach 280kph (174mph) and accelerate from 0-94kph (0-60mph) in around 5.4 seconds, which was lightning quick in the early 1960s.

6. On the big screen, the Ferrari 250 GTO is as rare as in real life. In *Vanilla Sky* (2001) and *Overdrive* (2017), replicas took centre stage, proof that even Hollywood's magic can't conjure up the real thing.

7. With its body hand-built by Sergio Scaglietti, Enzo's favoured coachbuilder, the 250 GTO's aerodynamic shape was refined through wind-tunnel testing and on-track experimentation. Its long bonnet, muscular curves, and distinctive oval grille created a car that was beautiful and brutally effective.

> "
> FOR ITALIANS, CARS ARE MORE THAN MERE TRANSPORT – THEY'RE CULTURAL ICONS, EXPRESSIONS OF NATIONAL PRIDE, AND MOVING WORKS OF ART

FERRARI

You can't think of Italian cars without thinking of Ferrari, and it was Enzo Ferrari who famously founded Scuderia Ferrari in 1929 in Modena as Alfa Romeo's official racing team. A decade later, he went his own way, forming Auto Avio Costruzioni and later moved to Maranello after the war, where in 1947 he debuted the brand's first car, the 125 S. Victories in Formula 1 and endurance racing cemented its reputation, while models like the 250 GTO, Testarossa, F40, Enzo, and LaFerrari redefined performance in a luxury sports car. Today, Ferrari blends heritage with hybrid innovation, with its legacy showcased at the Museo Ferrari in Maranello and Museo Enzo Ferrari in Modena.

The logo is a nod to WWI veteran, Count Francesco Baracca, who had it painted on his fighter plane

Image Getty Images

10 BEST ITALIAN INVENTIONS

FROM THERMOMETERS AND TYPEWRITERS TO MODERN-DAY MICROCHIPS, ITALIAN INVENTORS ARE BEHIND SOME OF THE MOST GROUND-BREAKING INVENTIONS ON THE PLANET

WORDS **REBECCA BRADBURY**

Pasta and pizza are possibly two of the best things to come out of Italy. But away from the kitchen, the nation also has a rich history of contributing significant inventions to the world.

Arguably, the most innovative Italian of them all was Leonardo da Vinci. Although best known for his artistic masterpieces, da Vinci's notebooks reveal he also had a knack for inventing. Unfortunately, hardly any of his concepts became a reality during his lifetime, as the science didn't exist – he was simply too far ahead of his time.

But in the centuries following da Vinci's death, many other brilliant Italians pioneered a variety of inventions still in use today, spanning the fields of science and engineering, to finance and communications.

THERMOMETER

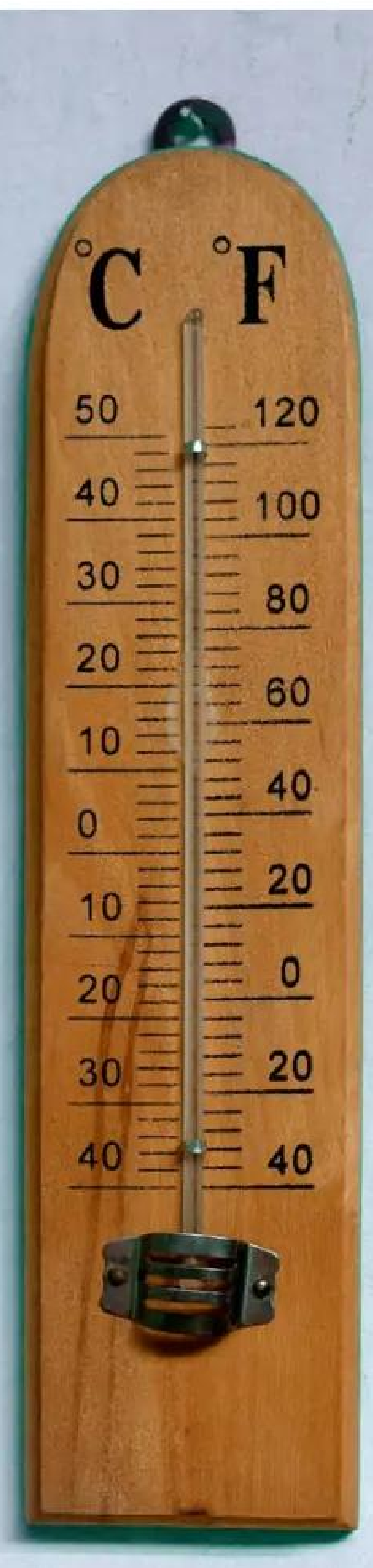
The origins of the thermometer can be traced back to three Italians, all working at different times throughout the 16th and 17th century.

First there was the Italian master of modern science, Galileo Galilei. He's credited with developing the precursor of the thermometer, the thermoscope, in 1593. While his new device gauged heat, it couldn't measure temperature because it had no scale.

In around 1612, Venetian scholar Santorio Santorio solved this problem. Yet the accuracy of his scale was poor as the effects of air pressure were not yet understood.

Thankfully, a breakthrough came in the 1650s when Ferdinando II de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, created a sealed glass tube design filled with distilled wine. As it was sealed, the instrument was less affected by changes in atmospheric pressure and so gave more reliable temperature measurements.

Although a universally accepted scale was still desperately needed, and mercury was yet to be implemented, Italy can still be credited with inventing the thermometer.



Three Italian inventors played a part in the origins of the thermometer

E L C
TEL BELL
Instruments Through which Telephonic Communication was held by Her Majesty the Queen
OSBORNE COTTAGE

Few people realise an Italian inventor had a significant part to play in the invention of the telephone

TELEPHONE

Think Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone? Well, this is not the whole story. Although he patented the device in 1876, some evidence points to him 'stealing' the work off his lab mate, an Italian inventor from Florence named Antonio Meucci.

After 15 years spent experimenting with electrotherapy in Cuba, Meucci relocated to Staten Island in New York in 1850, equipped with the background knowledge needed to start developing various electromagnetic telephone prototypes.

In 1871, the inventor filed a patent caveat for one such machine, dubbed the 'telettrofono'. However, plagued by debt and unable to secure investors, Meucci didn't have the funds that was needed to convert the machine into a full patent.

In the decades that followed, Meucci was largely forgotten about. But in 2002, the US Congress passed a resolution acknowledging Meucci's contributions and recognising him as a key figure in the telephone's development.

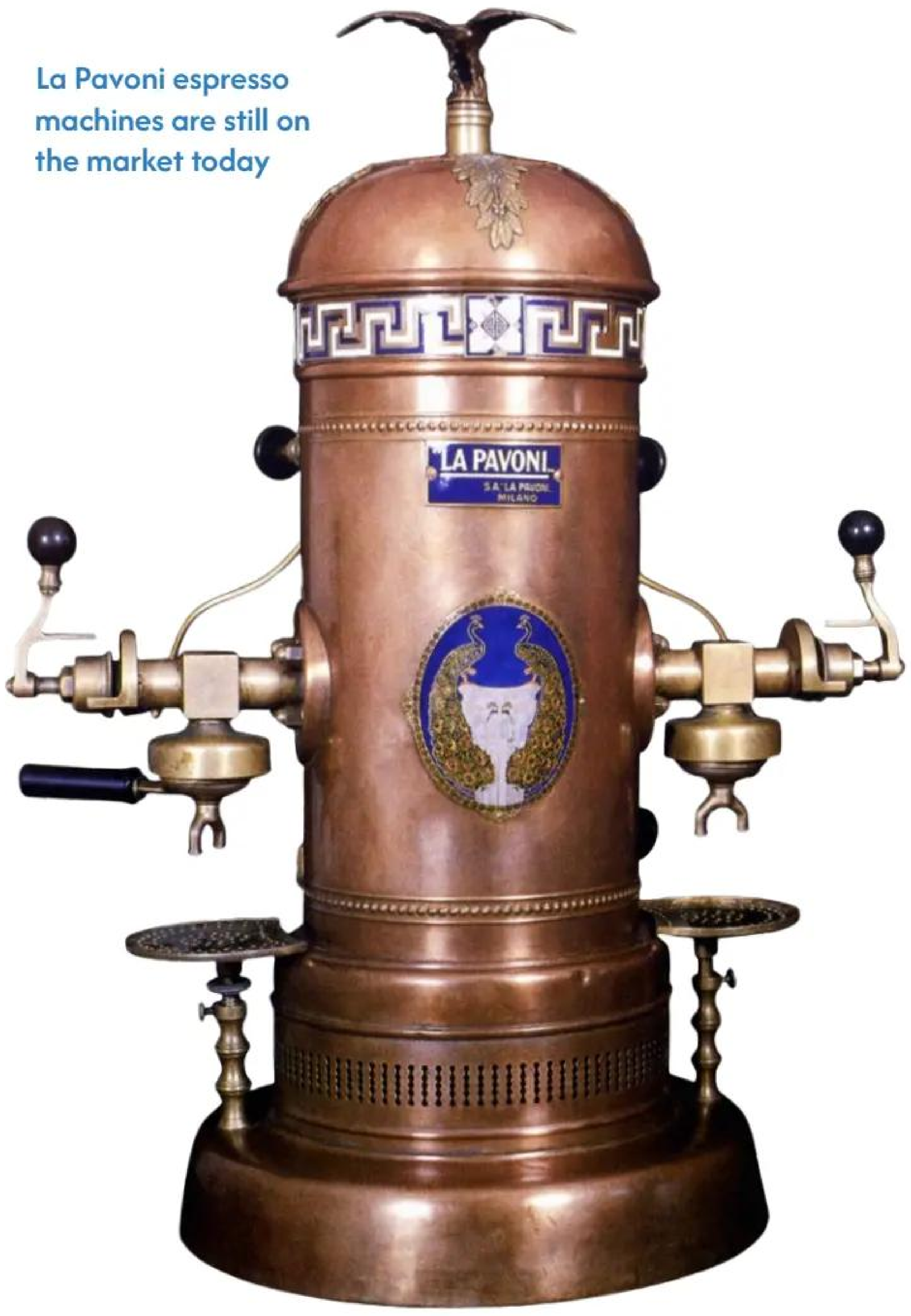
ESPRESSO MACHINE

As coffee culture is so ingrained within the Italian way of life, it probably comes as no surprise that we have the nation to thank for the espresso machine.

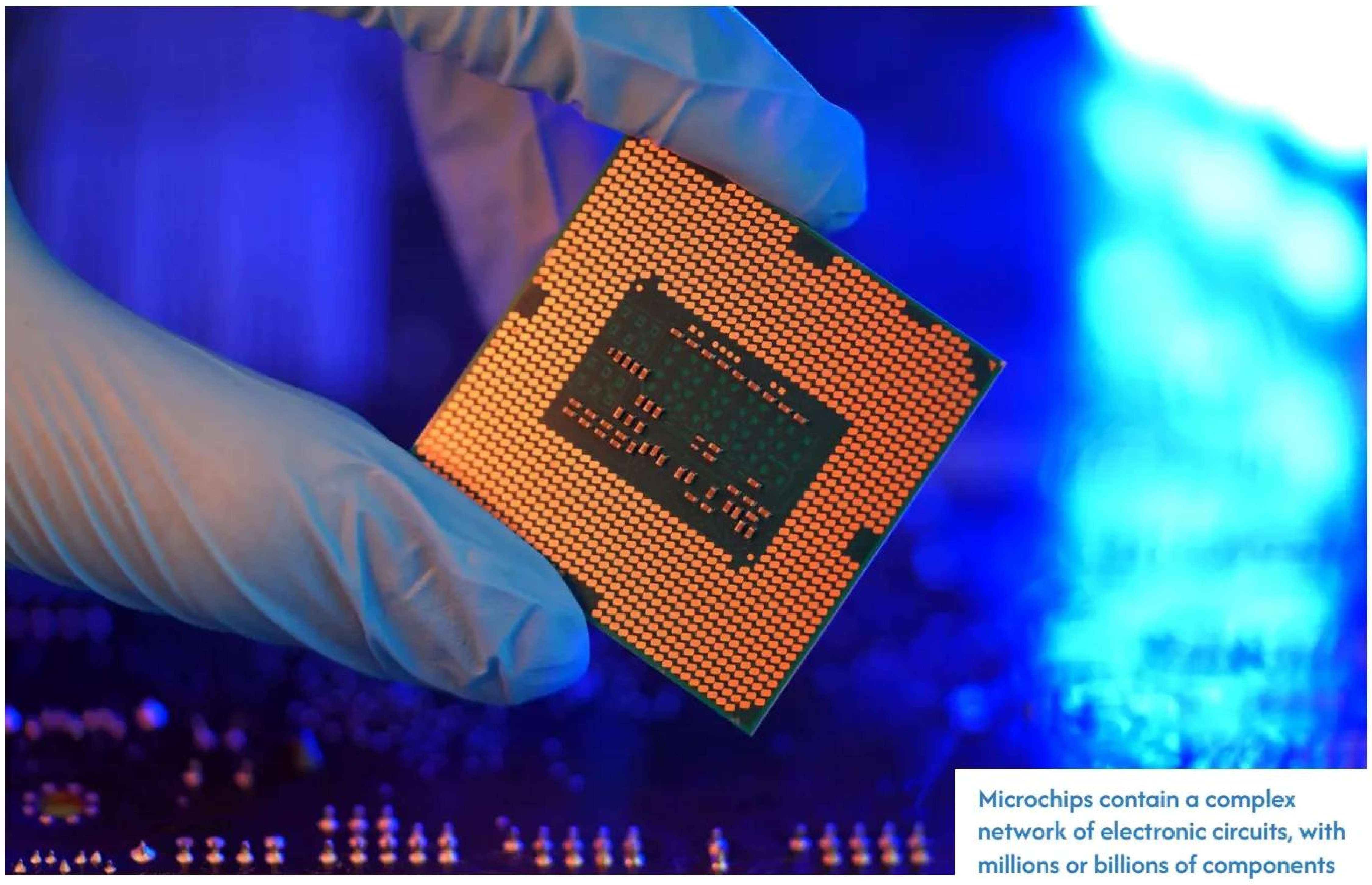
Coffee was big business in Europe in the 19th century, with many inventors exploring ways of using steam to reduce brewing time. The machine and method that would lead to the espresso is usually attributed to Angelo Moriondo of Turin, Italy, who was granted a patent in 1884 for "new steam machinery for the economic and instantaneous confection of coffee beverage". Yet Moriondo appears to have had a branding problem, as none of his machines exist today.

Building on Moriondo's work, however, was fellow Italian Luigi Bezzera. In the early 20th century, he added a portafilter and multiple brew heads to the design. Then came along Desiderio Pavoni, who worked alongside Bezzera to perfect the machine.

Pavoni not only added an important pressure release valve to the machine, but he is also credited with making espresso machines a commercial success.



La Pavoni espresso machines are still on the market today



Microchips contain a complex network of electronic circuits, with millions or billions of components

MICROCHIPS

Here's an invention from the 20th century, which although small in size, has had a gigantic impact on technology. Credited with designing the first commercial microchip, the Intel 4004, is Italian inventor, physicist and entrepreneur, Federico Faggin.

Born in Vicenza in 1941, Faggin relocated to Silicon Valley and, in 1970, started working for Intel. Six months later, he and his team had figured out a way of fitting a microprocessor – the 'brain' of a computer – onto one small chip.

Known as a microchip, the invention was originally developed for a Japanese calculator manufacturer. But Faggin had bigger ideas. He convinced Intel to renegotiate an exclusivity clause, so the microchip could be sold to other customers, and continued developing subsequent generations of the invention.

Without the microchip, technology as we know it today wouldn't exist. There would be no computers, no phones, no modern cars, nor any other smart electrical device.

LEONARDO DA VINCI'S INVENTIONS

1 SELF-SUPPORTING BRIDGE

One of the simplest - but most effective - of da Vinci's inventions is a portable wooden bridge built to help armies cross bodies of water without the need for screws.

2 HELICOPTER

Although the first actual helicopter wasn't built until the 20th century, da Vinci's sketches from 500-odd years ago are very close to those of the modern-day machine.

3 PARACHUTE

Da Vinci never actually got round to making it, but his famous science journal, *Codex Atlanticus*, contains sketches and descriptions of something resembling a parachute.

4 SELF-PROPELLED CART

Powered by coiled springs, da Vinci's conceptualised cart featured breaking and pre-programmable steering systems, and is considered an early ancestor of the car.

5 TANK

Again, da Vinci never actually made a tank, but he developed a plan for an armoured vehicle, equipped with weapons, which looked a little bit like one.

Leonardo da Vinci dreamed up innovations and inventions which were far ahead of his time

Images Getty Images, Alamy

MODERN BANKING

To discover the origins of today's banking system, we have to go back to medieval and Renaissance Italy, when northern city-states like Venice, Florence, Siena and Genoa were rich hubs of trade and innovation.

As trade expanded in these cities, so did the need for capital and credit. Italian merchants turned to wealthy families and financiers to fund their ventures, laying the groundwork for formal banking institutions.

The earliest banks emerged in Florence, where families like Medici began to operate financial services for merchants, rulers and the Catholic Church. The Medici bank pioneered many practices that remain central to banking today, such as loans, deposits and credit. Meanwhile in Venice, maritime insurance developed alongside the double-entry bookkeeping system, which is still fundamental to business accounting.

Letters of credit and bills of exchange (similar to what we could call a cheque today) were also introduced to transfer large sums of money safely across long distances.

NEWSPAPERS

The newspaper has undergone many transformations over many centuries, with the earliest precursor to the modern newspaper generally believed to have begun in Venice in 1566.

Taking the form of handwritten news sheets, these *avvisi*, or gazettes, focused on political and military news from Italy and Europe. Becoming known as the Venetian papers, they were distributed weekly on single sheets, folded into four pages.

In the absence of printing-press technology, they were meticulously handwritten by individuals known as *menanti*, *reportisti* or *gazzettieri*, and this limited the paper's circulation. But their influence did spread throughout Europe, becoming an important step in the development of the newspaper.

Some argue the Romans got in there first, however. Dating back to 59 BCE, *Acta Diurna*, translated as Daily Doings, were official announcements, chronicles of events, and even gossip that were carved onto stone or metal and posted in prominent locations.

BLUE JEANS

Contrary to popular belief, Levi Strauss didn't actually invent jeans. While the US-based German immigrant played an integral part in popularising the modern version we know and love today, denim trousers can actually be traced back to Genoa in Italy – the term 'jeans' is even believed to be derived from *'Gênes'*, the French word for Genoa.

In the 15th century, shipbuilders and merchants in Genoa used a cheap, coarse and strong cross-weaved type of cotton to make sails and protect goods. The fabric was imported from Nîmes – or de Nîmes (hence the term, denim) – a French textile town. At the same time, indigo was imported to Genoa from India and locals started dying the fabric blue and extending their repertoire from ship sails to clothing. The fabric soon became popular among sailors and workers due to its durability and resistance to wear and tear.

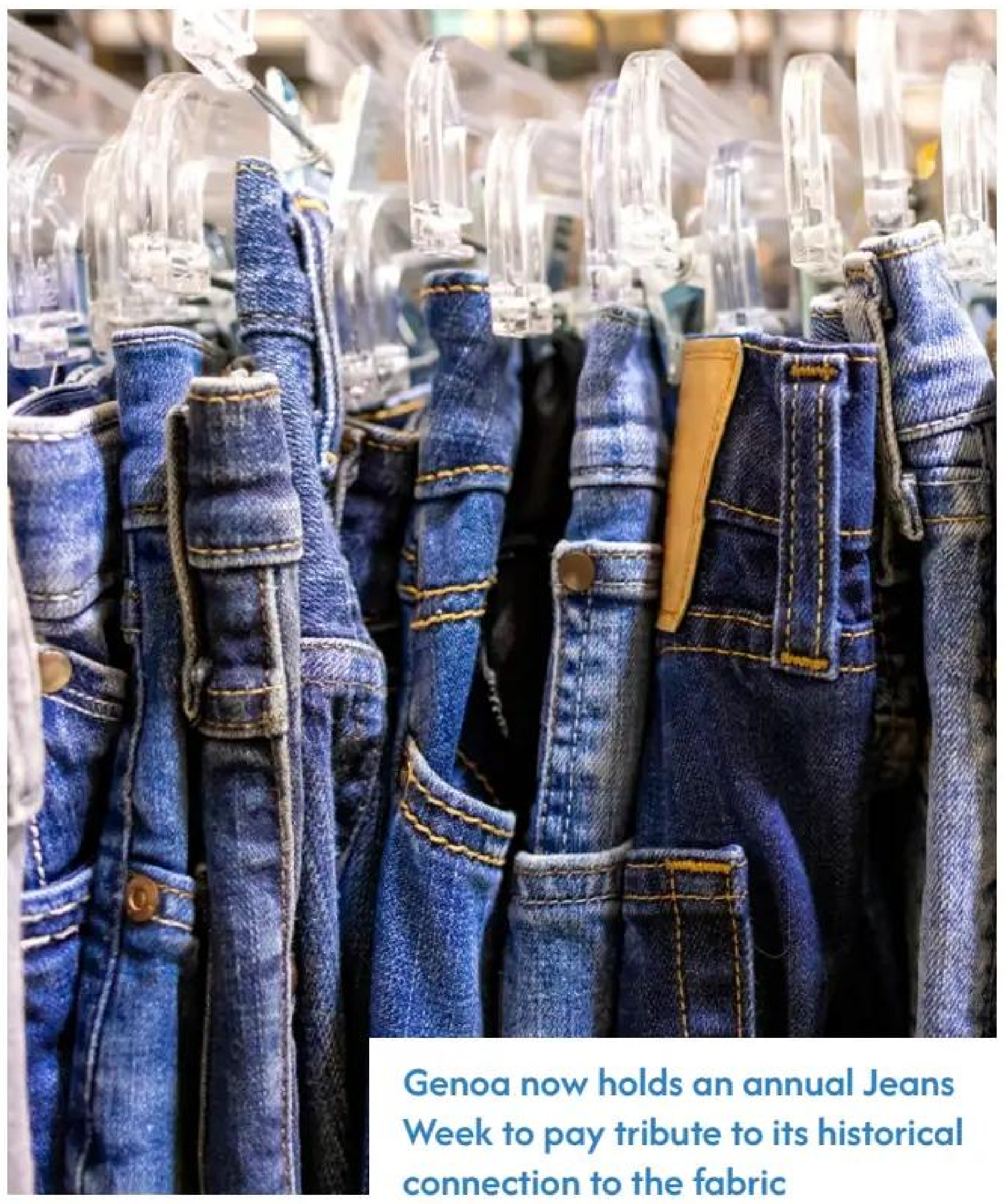
Genoa today is reclaiming its historical connection to the fabric by developing a sustainable denim industry, as well as hosting a variety of cultural events and festivals.

MONTE DEI PASCHI DI SIENA
BANCA DAL 1472
Versament
Prelevamen

Founded in 1472, Banca Monte Dei Paschi is the oldest surviving bank in the world

Internazionale
LaVerità
il Fatto Quotidiano
ANTITRUST CASE COURT WEIGHS GOOGLE'S FATE

'Gazette' comes from the Venetian coin '*gazzetta*', which was the cost of the early news sheets in Venice



Genoa now holds an annual Jeans Week to pay tribute to its historical connection to the fabric

International Battery Day is held on 18 February, the birthday of Alessandro Volta

BATTERIES

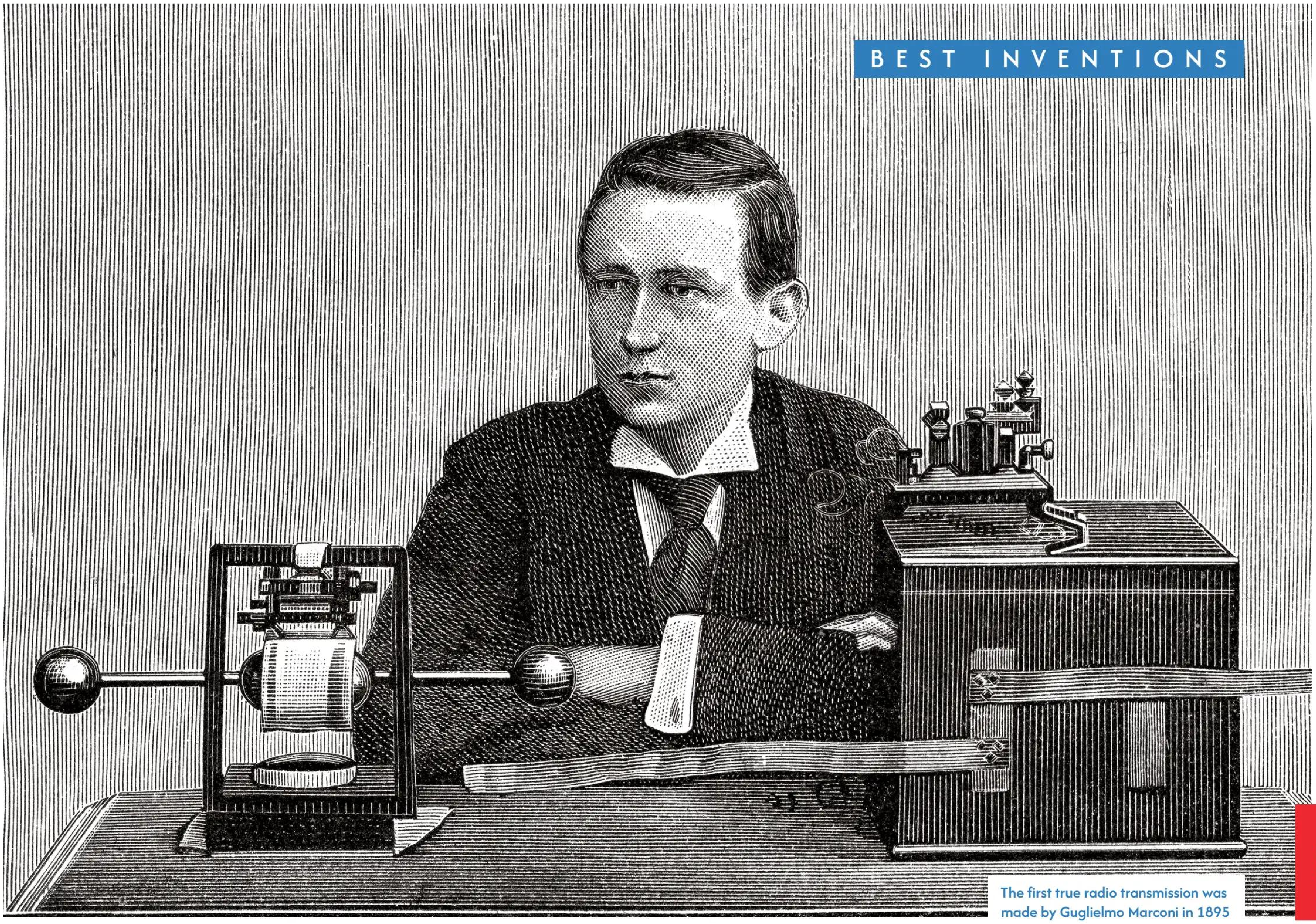
The inspiration behind the invention of the battery came from Italian physicist Alessandro Volta wanting to prove his friend and fellow physicist, Luigi Galvani, wrong.

After experimenting on frogs, Galvani thought electricity came from animal tissue, a theory that is known as 'animal electricity'. To refute his friend's findings, Volta set out to demonstrate his own theory, that electricity could actually be generated by the contact of metals.

The result was the voltaic pile – the first electronic battery. Invented in 1800, it consisted of alternating layers of zinc and copper discs separated by brine-soaked cloth or cardboard, stacked on top of each other to create an electric current.

A chemical reaction occurred between the electrolytes (salt) in the brine and the metal, creating a flow of electrons and thus an electric current. The invention was groundbreaking because it provided a reliable and continuous source of electrical power.

As the voltaic pile laid the groundwork for the modern battery, the term 'volt' was officially adopted as the unit of electromotive force and electric potential difference.



The first true radio transmission was made by Guglielmo Marconi in 1895

RADIO

Although decades of research into radio waves proceeded his work, the Italian electrical engineer, Guglielmo Marconi from Bologna, is credited with developing a system that could transmit and receive signals over long distances, aka the radio.

When faced with rejection in Italy for his early wireless telegraphy work, Marconi moved to London and things began to look up. He successfully transmitted a Morse code message over 3.2km (2mi) in 1895 and, a year later, obtained the first patent for a wireless telegraphy system in England.

But his major breakthrough came in 1901 when he received the first transatlantic radio signal, connecting Europe and North America and demonstrating the potential of radio for long-distance communication. While at first he focused on commercialising his work for the maritime industry, he became instrumental in popularising radio and making it a household technology.

> HE BECAME INSTRUMENTAL IN POPULARISING RADIO AND MAKING IT A HOUSEHOLD TECHNOLOGY

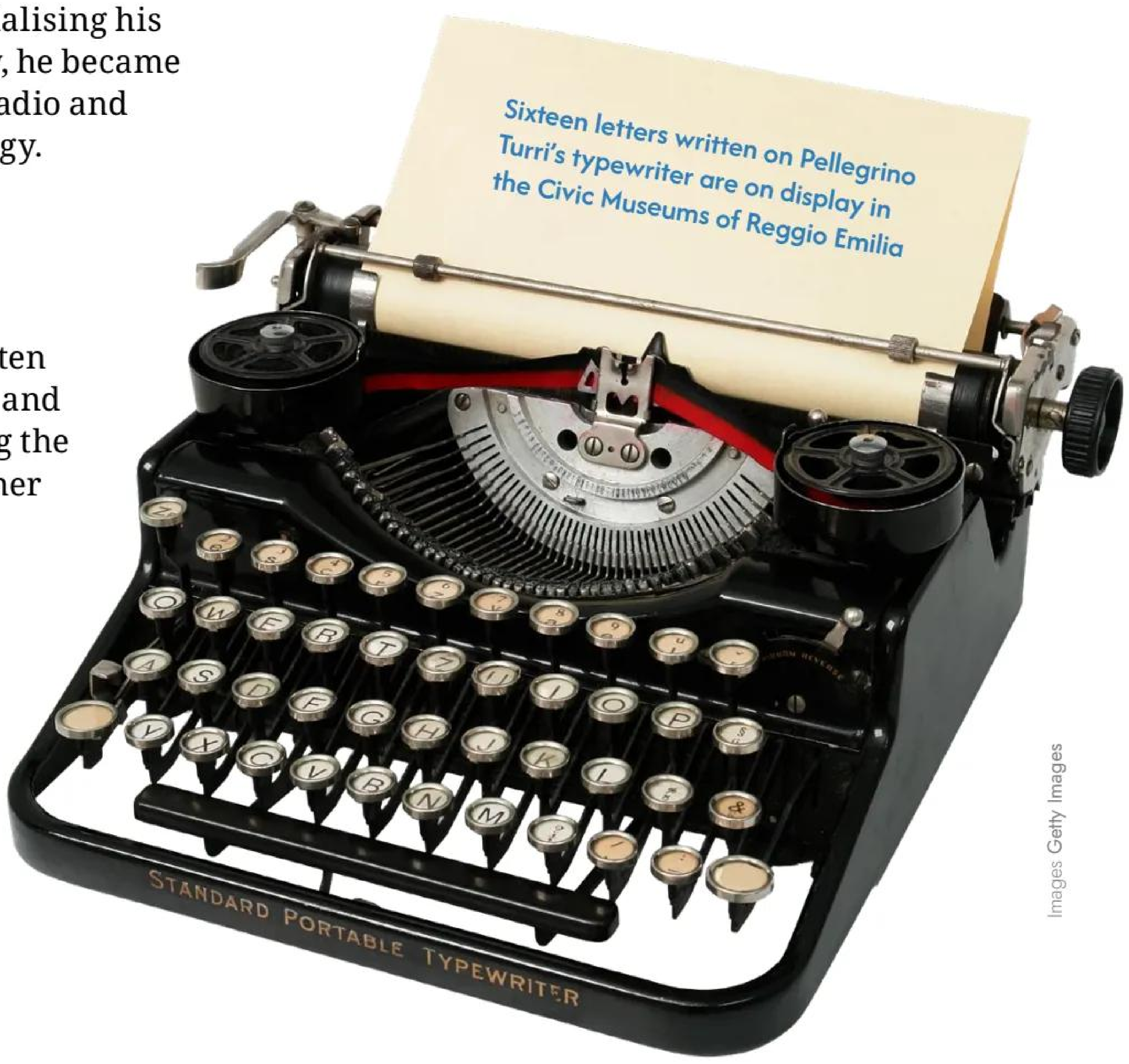
TYPEWRITER

With its clattering keys and end-of-line dings, the typewriter and its distinctive symphony has played a significant role in shaping how we produce written content.

Although a few inventors have received credit for various developments, most historians accept the efforts of Italian inventor Pellegrino Turri as crucial for the typewriter's fledgling days.

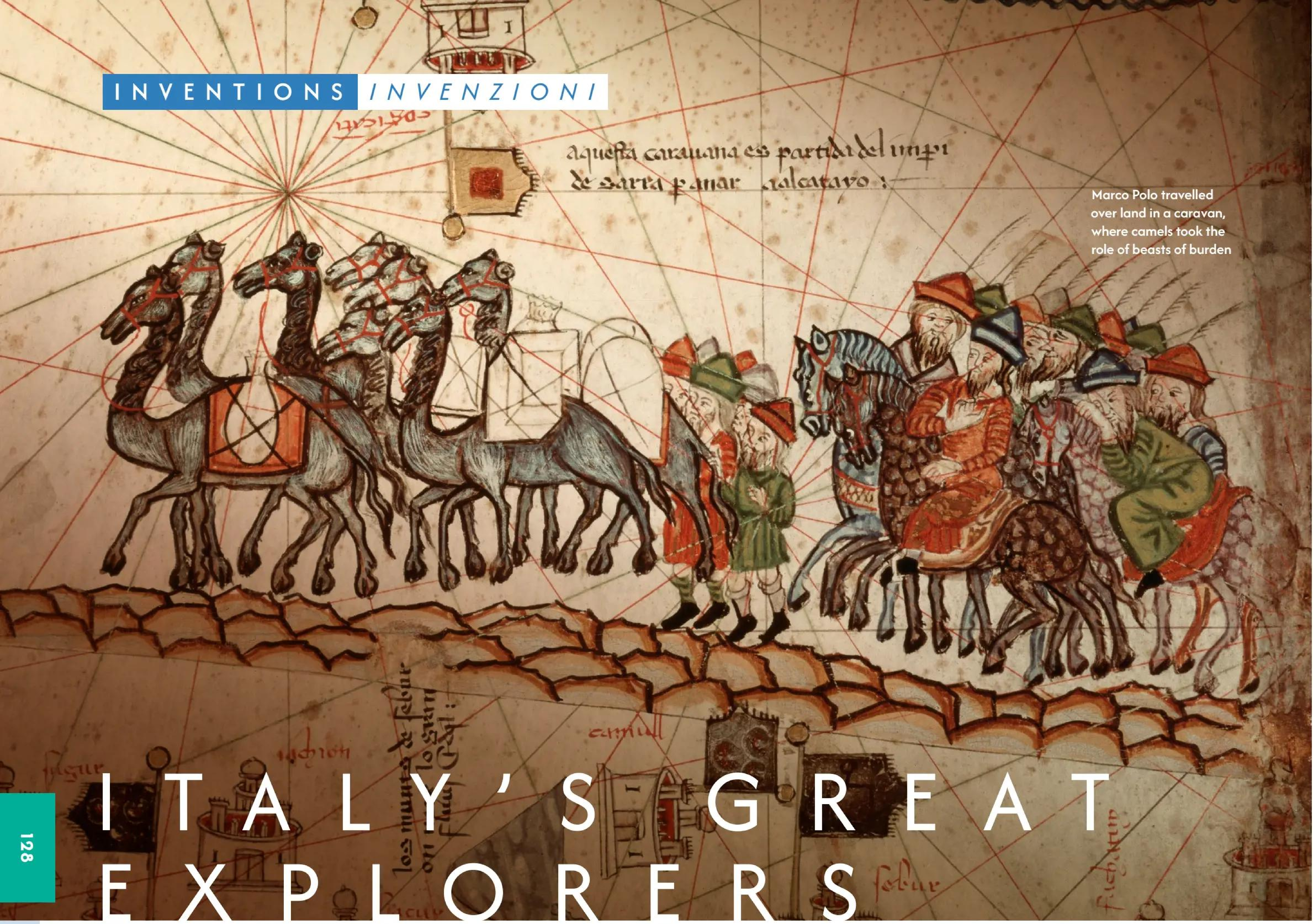
Turri reportedly built his typewriter at the start of the 19th century to help his blind friend, Countess Carolina Fantoni da Fivizzano, write letters without the help of others. While not much is known about the actual device, some letters written by the Countess have survived, and discuss her progress in learning the machine, referring to Turri as her "dear friend".

Alongside his typing device, Turri also invented a form of carbon paper in 1801. Yet five years later, Ralph Wedgwood patented his version of carbon paper, meaning the Italian doesn't often get the credit he deserves for this invention.



Sixteen letters written on Pellegrino Turri's typewriter are on display in the Civic Museums of Reggio Emilia

Images Getty Images


aqueſta carauana es partida del impi
de sarra p anar al catayo

Marco Polo travelled over land in a caravan, where camels took the role of beasts of burden

ITALY'S GREAT EXPLORERS

THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT HAS BEEN SHAPED BY THE INCREDIBLE VOYAGES UNDERTAKEN BY ITALIAN EXPLORERS SEARCHING FOR FAME, FORTUNE, AND KNOWLEDGE

WORDS **HANNAH SOAR**

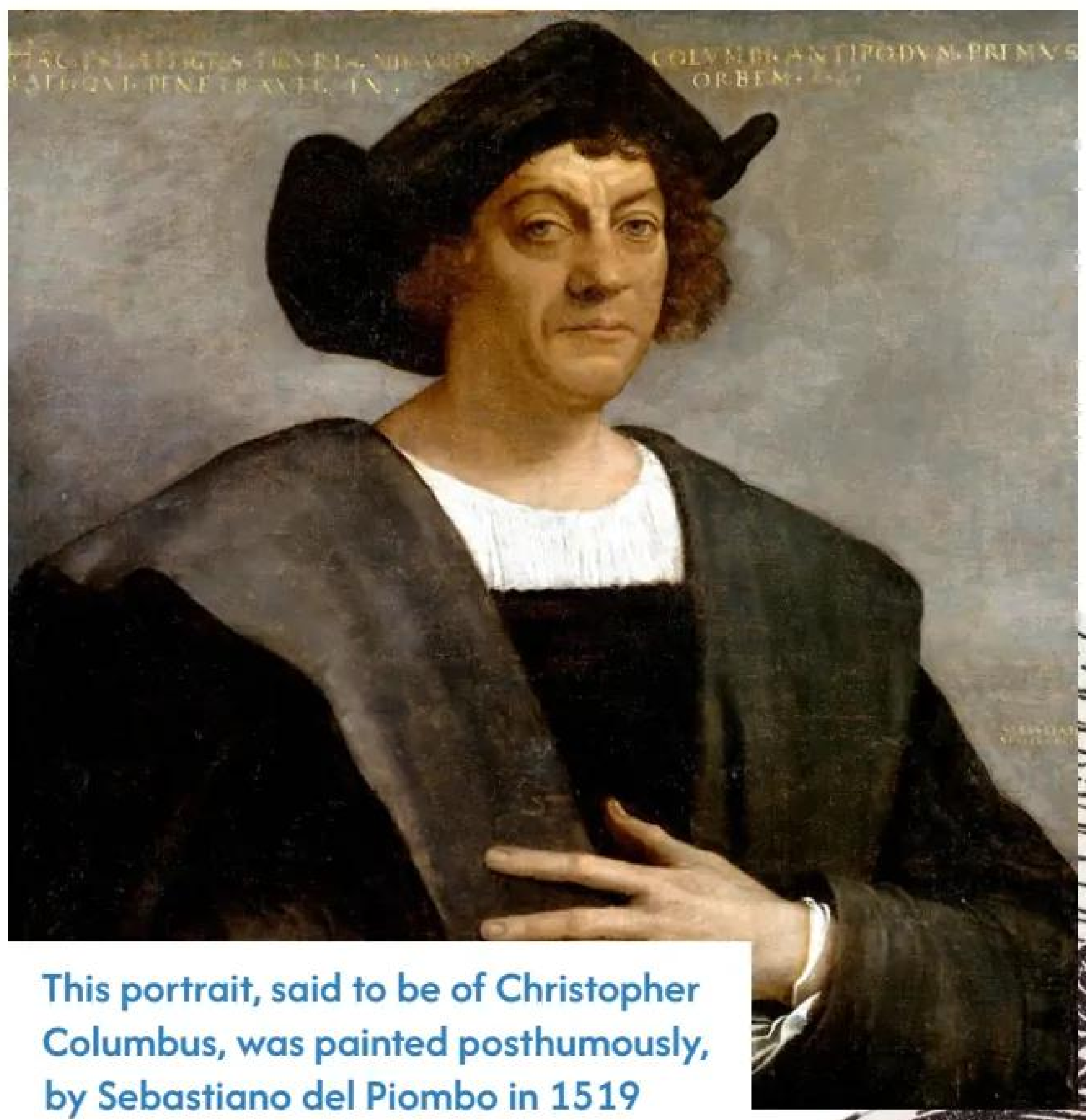
Italy's explorers from the Age of Exploration have played a pivotal role in shaping the course of history, turning the tides of discovery. From the daring voyages of Christopher Columbus, who crossed the Atlantic in search of new trade routes, to the maps of Amerigo Vespucci, whose name immortalised the Americas, these adventurers were not just seeking riches, but they triggered huge cultural exchange. Their journeys unveiled uncharted territories, sparked the Age of Enlightenment, and ignited the spirit of adventure in the people of Europe. Their quests, however, also had dire consequences for other parts of the world. Disease, war, and subjugation were inflicted upon Indigenous Americans, and the routes charted by exploratory ships paved the way for the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It's a time with a complex legacy.

MARCO POLO 1254-1324

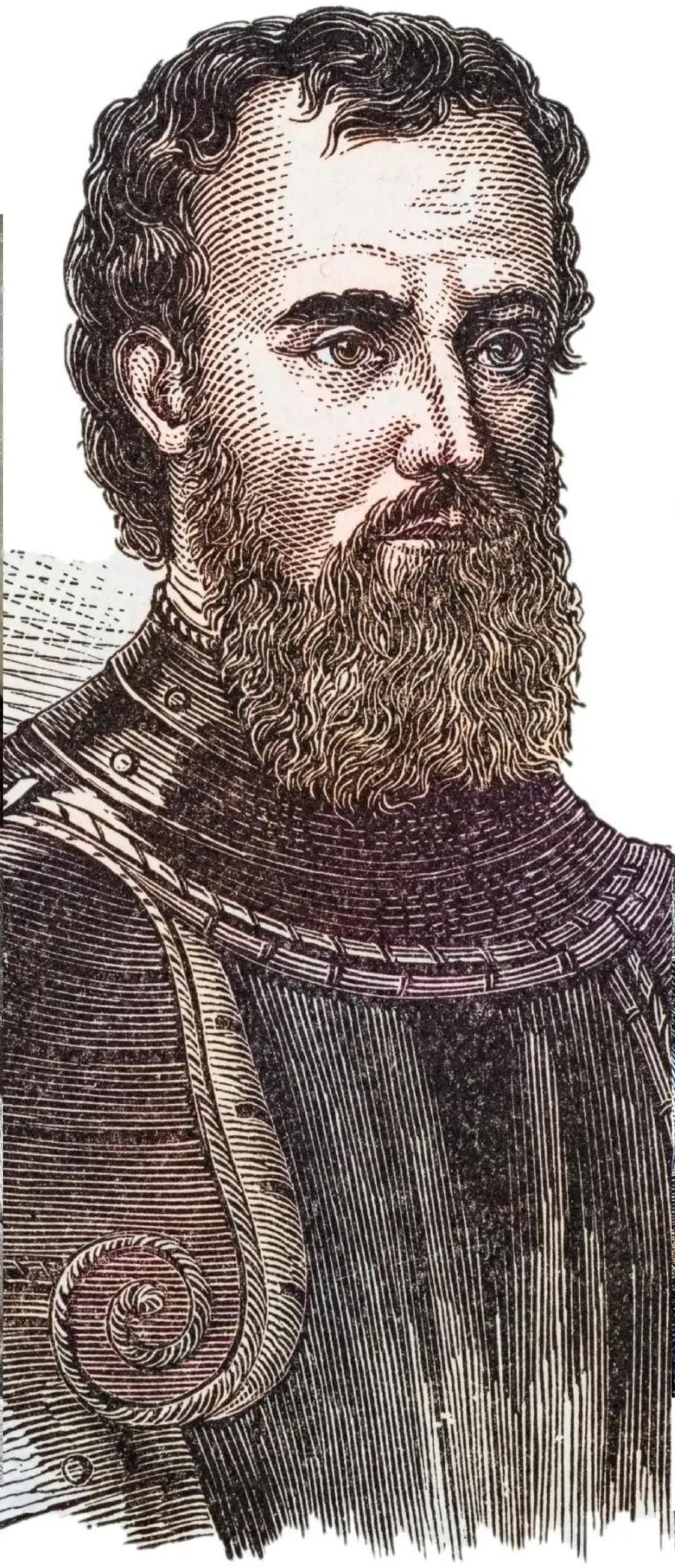
Venetian merchant Marco Polo was not the first European to reach China and beyond, but his accounts of his travels were the first of their kind. When Polo embarked on his extraordinary journey in the late 13th century, he changed European perceptions of the East. Travelling along the Silk Road, he reached the court of Kublai Khan in China, the founder of China's Yuan Dynasty. Polo served Khan as an envoy, or emissary, where he gained experience of a civilisation rich in culture and innovation, but so different to Venice. Polo's detailed accounts, which were dictated to a writer while the two were imprisoned, were later published in *The Travels of Marco Polo*. They introduced Europeans to the wonders of Asia: its art, technologies, and cultures. Polo's chronicles paved the way for the Age of Discovery, and certainly inspired Christopher Columbus over a century later.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS 1451-1506

Christopher Columbus, the Genoan navigator whose name is synonymous with exploration, embarked on his historic voyage in 1492. Sponsored by the Spanish monarchy, he sailed across the Atlantic to find a westward route to the East Indies. Instead, he stumbled upon the Bahamas, marking the beginning of European colonisation in the Americas. Columbus's expeditions revealed new lands and resources, igniting a wave of exploration and conquest that reshaped global trade and culture. This exchange of plants, animals and diseases is called the Columbian exchange and includes the introduction of, for example, potatoes and tomatoes to the Old World, and rice, wheat, and sugarcane to the New World. However, his legacy is complex. While celebrated for his discoveries, his encounters with Indigenous peoples led to profound, devastating consequences and a dark chapter of history.

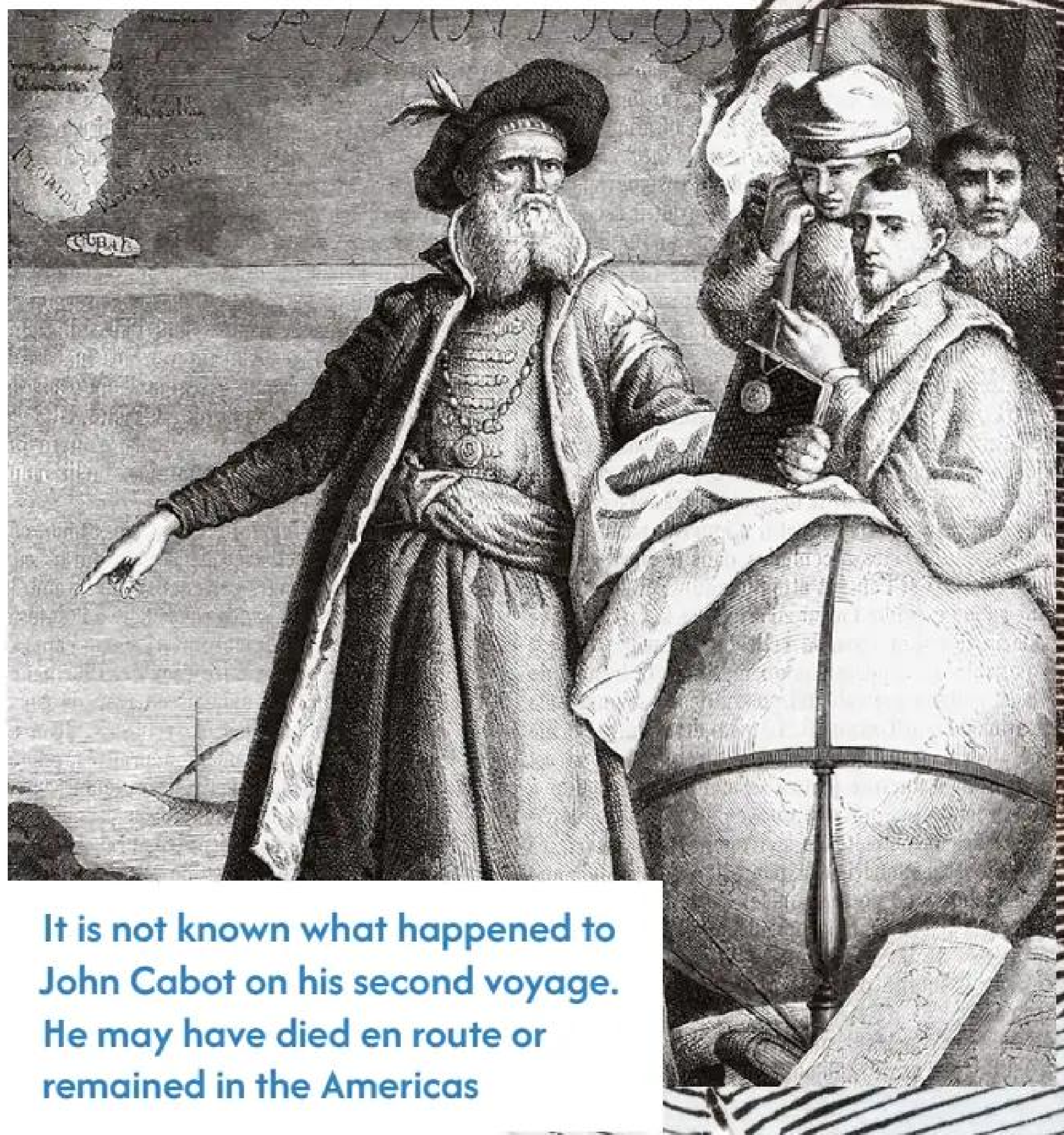


This portrait, said to be of Christopher Columbus, was painted posthumously, by Sebastiano del Piombo in 1519

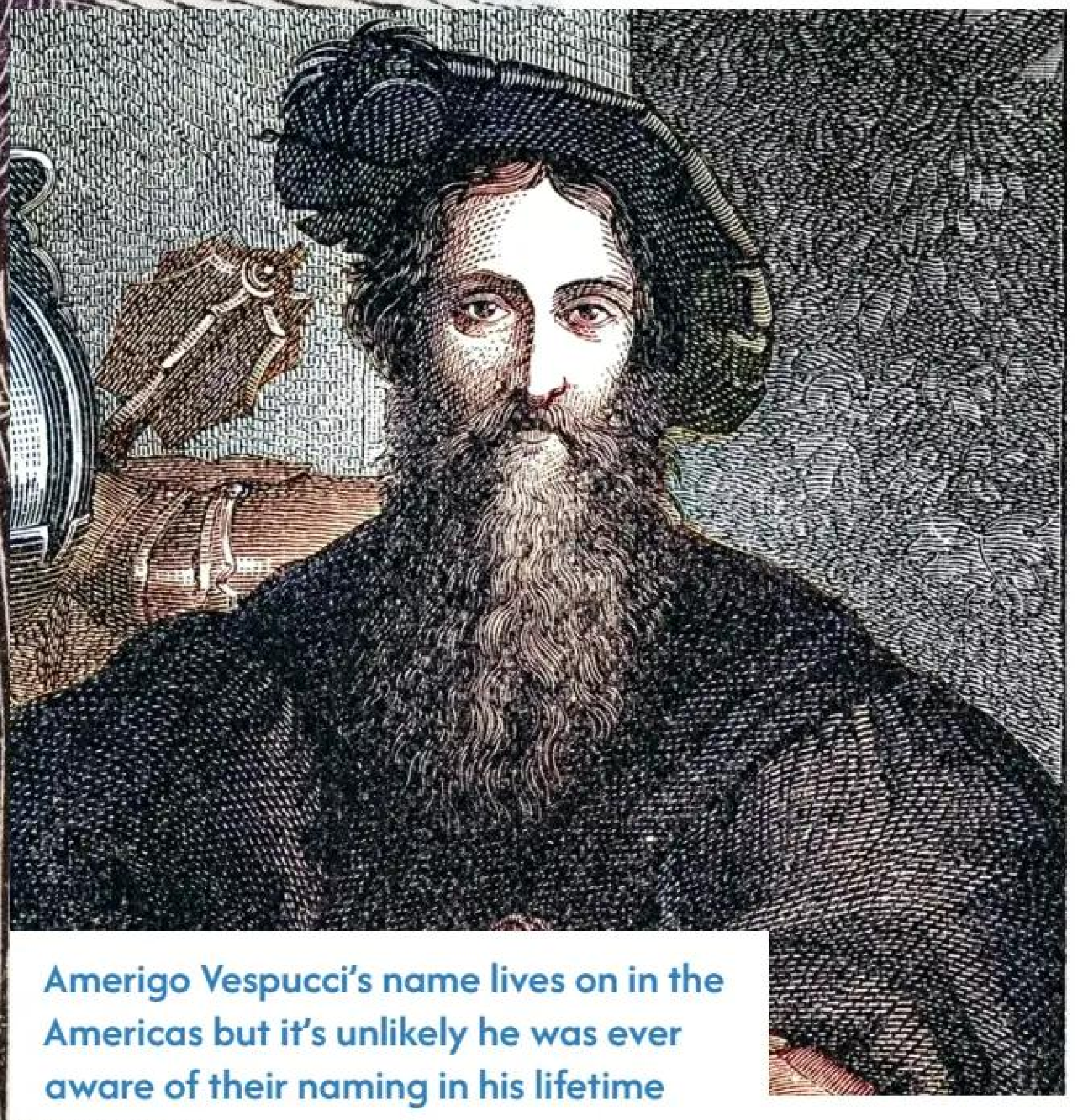


Some of da Verrazzano's discoveries were overshadowed by other events, such as the war with the Aztec Empire

> THEIR JOURNEYS UNVEILED TERRITORIES, AND IGNITED THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE



It is not known what happened to John Cabot on his second voyage. He may have died en route or remained in the Americas



Amerigo Vespucci's name lives on in the Americas but it's unlikely he was ever aware of their naming in his lifetime

JOHN CABOT 1450-99

The Italian explorer known for his pivotal role in early North American exploration made his mark in the late 15th century. Sailing under the English flag by commission from Henry VII, Cabot embarked on a 1497 voyage that took him across the Atlantic in search of a new route to Asia. He purposefully decided to take a northerly route, in contrast to Christopher Columbus. He landed on what modern historians believe was the coast of what is now Newfoundland, Canada. This feat makes Cabot one of the first Europeans to set foot on North America since the Vikings had reached Vinland around 1000 CE. Cabot's discovery laid the groundwork for England's future claims to North America and opened the door to further exploration and exploitation of the continent's resources. While not as famous as Columbus, Cabot's contributions to history are truly significant.

AMERIGO VESPUCCI 1454-1512

The Florentine navigator and explorer is most famous for his significant contributions to mapping the New World. Sailing under both the Spanish and Portuguese flags in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, Vespucci embarked on several voyages along the coasts of South America and Central America, including what is now Venezuela and Brazil. His records and letters about the coastlines, landscape, plants, and animals of these regions provided a clearer understanding of the continent's incredible, and as-of-yet poorly understood, size and diversity. Two letters attributed to Vespucci about these missions, published between 1503 and 1505, were widely published in Europe (though their truthfulness is in doubt). Publishers of these accounts suggested naming the new continents in honour of Vespucci, which is why today we call the New World the Americas.

GIOVANNI DA VERRAZZANO 1485-1528

This Florentine explorer made significant strides in navigating the uncharted waters of North America. In service of King Francis I of France, da Verrazzano set sail in 1524, driven by the hope of discovering a new sea passage to the Pacific and expanding French influence in the New World. His voyage took him along the Eastern Seaboard, between what is now Florida and Newfoundland, where da Verrazzano became the first European to explore New York Harbor and the coast of North Carolina. His travel accounts provided valuable insights into the coastline, the people, and ecosystems of the places he encountered. After returning to France, he embarked on two further voyages, with his final voyage, in 1528, likely responsible for his demise. Nonetheless, his voyages had a significant influence on cartography and laid the groundwork for future exploration.

Images Getty Images

ITALY

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Editorial
Editor **Zara Gaspar**
Art Editor **Thomas Parrett**
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**
Editorial Director **Jon White**
Managing Director **Grainne McKenna**

Contributors
Hareth Al Bustani, Felicity Barnum-Bobb, Jen Bedloe, Rebecca Bradbury, Steve Charnock, Jo Cole, Natalie Denton, Mark DeSantis, Mark Dolan, Victoria Eldridge, Keiron George, Jack Griffiths, James Grimshaw, Grant Ford, Jamie Frier, Bee Ginger, Michael E Haskew, Rachel Ifans, Kate Marsh, Tanita Matthews, Julia Mitchell, Callum McKelvie, Adam Millward, Phil Mundy, Oli Rahman, Hannah Soars, Emily Staniforth, Pete Wise

Cover images
Getty Images, Alamy

Photography
Futurecontenthub.com, TimeincUK.com, Hannah Hughes,
Maja Smend, Gus Filgate
All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

International
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com
www.futurecontenthub.com

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Matthew Eglinton**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely,**
Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman

Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce – www.marketforce.co.uk
For enquiries, please email: mfcommunications@futurenet.com

GPSR EU RP (for authorities only)
eucomply OÜ Pärnu mnt 139b-14 11317, Tallinn, Estonia
hello@eucompliancepartner.com, +3375690241

Italy First Edition (LBZ7109)
© 2025 Future Publishing Limited

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this bookazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards.

All contents © 2025 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

FUTURE
Connectors.
Creators.
Experience
Makers.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Officer **Kevin Li Ying**
Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial Officer **Sharjeel Suleman**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

Widely Recycled

ipso. Regulated

ITALY

YOUR HANDBOOK TO THE LAND OF 'LA DOLCE VITA'

OVER
15
MUST-VISIT
LOCATIONS

ICONS ON WHEELS

ICONS ON WHEELS

WHY THE FERRARI AND THE VESPA ARE MORE THAN JUST MODES OF TRANSPORT

MADE IN ITALY

DRESS TO IMPRESS

DISCOVER THE TIMELESS APPEAL OF ITALIAN FASHION, CRAFT AND CULTURE

A TASTE OF ITALY

A TASTE OF ITALY

LEARN TO DINE LIKE A NATIVE AND START A LOVE-AFFAIR WITH FOOD

THE ITALIAN LAKES

NATURAL WONDERS

FROM MOUNTAINS AND VOLCANOES, TO DRAMATIC COASTLINES AND LAKES

SPORT • WINE REGIONS • RELIGION • CINEMA

BOOKAZINE